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SUBTLETY ON THE SCREEN. "The film," says Campbell Nairne in an article in this issue of *Cinema Quarterly*, "is, by its very nature, a medium incapable of being at once subtle and intelligible."

We must either accept this statement at its face value, and reluctantly place the film as a means of expression at a lower level than most of its protagonists would admit it to be, or else reconsider our idea of what is meant by subtlety and intelligibility, along with what we understand as cinema.

To be intelligible, in its broadest sense, implies surely that the ideas expressed by their creator may be readily comprehended by the spectator. In this respect, by creating its illusions by means of naturalistic material, the film can be as simple as a child's first picture book. Subtlety, on the other hand, is a more cerebral accomplishment, demanding a delicate apprehension of the finer shades of thought and expression.

On considerations apart from even the grossly commercial one of requiring to address the largest possible audience, what Nairne calls the "momentariness" of the film would seem to limit expression to a studied simplicity. "Momentariness" means that unless the image and its accompanying aural are immediately understandable the spectator will have failed to grasp their significance before other images and other sounds will be engrossing his attention. Thus it would appear that the film-maker's powers of expression are restricted not to the compass of his own abilities but to the physiological limitations of the spectator—hence the well-worn but readily understood symbolism of the average Hollywood production. The use of the cliché in journalism recently was defended on the grounds that the familiar phrase ought to be regarded as an ideograph, or omnibus expression, and accepted as any single word in common use is accepted. But journalism is not literature, and while the cliché and picture-book simplicity may be necessary in the average feature film, which must tell its tale with precision and speed, it does not follow that the medium, as a whole, is incapable of subtlety.

Campbell Nairne is a novelist, and his view of the film is justified

by his experience as an imaginative craftsman. The full-length dramatic film must rely on a rapid progressiveness and a rigid economy of means for its effect. It cannot afford to be discursive, to elaborate detail, or to indulge in subjective analysis—all of which are prerogatives of the novelist's art. But the dramatic feature film is not all cinema, and it is not without significance that certain modern poets such as W. H. Auden and C. Day Lewis are coming to regard the film as a medium worth consideration. When they get to grips with it in their experiments they may discover that its technique is not greatly different from that of their own poetry. It may even transpire that what they have been attempting to do in verse will achieve finality in film.

SCOPE FOR THE SHORT FILM. The truth is, there are many kinds of film—not just “film.” Actually the technique of the long film has more in common with that of the short story than of the novel. Was it not Tchekov who gave a sane piece of cinematic advice to a young writer when he said, “You must make them feel the moonlight as it glints from a fragment of bottle in the garden”? The cinema has long been accustomed to borrow from literature, but generally from the wrong sources. If it must learn from another medium, let it consider the short stories of Tchekov, Coppard, Powys, even Katherine Mansfield; the poetry of the imagists; the experiments of sur-realism. Paradoxical as it may seem, the short film has more time at its disposal than the long film, and without having to concern itself with the dramatics of rapid action and constructed situation, can indulge in subjective speculation and the analysis of mental and emotional processes. Only the documentary schools, however, in which the greater part of the intelligence in cinema seems at present to be concentrated, is experimenting boldly along new lines. The only shorts which the commercial studios appear to be capable of making are so-called comedies, which exasperate even star-infatuated audiences who suffer them only to see the glamorous feature they accompany.

True, there have been such excursions in novelty as *Pett and Pott*, *Dawn to Dawn* and *Lot in Sodom*, but these have been independently inspired. The studios are still blind not only to the entertainment value of the short film but to its usefulness as a breeding ground for new ideas and new talent. On the score of risk and expense, experiment in feature-film production is made almost impossible. (A coloured *Becky Sharp* is risked for the prize, not of developing a new technique, but of popularising a technical process of immense potential monetary value.) This bar to experiment is one of the main factors which retard the artistic development of the film. There is, however, little or no financial risk attached to the making

of shorts; and even if there were, even if every foot of celluloid thus used lost hard cash, it would be worth every penny for the ultimate good of cinema, both artistically and commercially.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SCENARIO.—Ernest Betts, who introduced the admirable idea of publishing film scenarios in book form, evidently imagines from an editorial in our last issue that *Cinema Quarterly* underestimates the importance of the scenario. That is not so. A poor script has ruined many a potentially fine film; that in itself is sufficient gauge of the scenario's place in cinema. Triumphantly, Betts flourishes the fact that even Chaplin uses a scenario. Of course he does. His films would be the poorer if he did not. But they are his own scripts. And that is exactly the point we made, and still make—that scenario and direction should not be divorced from each other, but should be undertaken by the same person, or persons.

Undoubtedly, under present conditions, the scenarist is entitled to greater credit than he now receives, and the director probably less. Conversely, much of the criticism delivered against direction should be levelled against the scenario.

We are asked to hazard a guess as to when films will be the single, individual creation of one person, and to consider whether criticism would be “worth a rap which totally ignored present conditions, namely the organized regimentation of many talents.” But would criticism which complacently accepted conditions as they are be worth anything at all? The “regimentation of talents” must be organized in the best possible way, and any criticism which matters must be concerned not only with what is but with what should be. To answer one question by asking another, does anyone seriously believe that the exact images, movement, rhythm, light and sounds of a film can be reduced to words and sentences so that “a director can read a script as a musician reads a score”?

NON-FLAM FILM TEST CASE. Some months ago the County Durham Police prosecuted the proprietors of a hall in Boldon for allowing the film *Potemkin* to be shown, on the grounds that the 16 mm. stock used was inflammable and therefore came under the Cinematograph Act, 1909. A Home Office expert was called in to prove that the film used was inflammable. However, the summonses were dismissed by the Jarrow Bench, with costs against the police, who subsequently appealed. W. H. Thompson, the London solicitor defending the case, was recently informed by the solicitor to the County Durham Police that the appeal is not to be proceeded with.

It would seem, therefore, that the authorities now accept the fact that the 16 mm. safety film is non-inflammable and therefore can be shown in public without special precautions.

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THE WRITER'S APPROACH TO CINEMA

CAMPBELL NAIRNE

THE FILM student is not unnaturally contemptuous when he hears that Mr. X, the darling of the book guilds, has been engaged to prepare the "film transcript" or "screen treatment" of a novel. He suspects that in return for his sizeable cheque the distinguished man of letters will do no more than draft out a précis, cast in impeccably rounded sentences, or contribute the "additional dialogue" required to fill gaps left by condensation of the original. Scornfully he points out (remembering his Pudovkin) that the imagination of the literary artist is not trained to express its concepts in terms of plastic images; that the literary artist is not concerned with visuals—nor, it may be added, with sounds. The detailed preparation of the script, which is virtually the creative process, will of course be left to the professional scenarist and director, who are technically equipped (as the man of letters is not) for the job of translating words into sounds and images.

"The appeal to authors by which film producers every now and then try to curry favour with the intelligentsia is utterly absurd," writes Arnheim, and that is the attitude one expects to find among those who have convinced themselves that cinema can and must stand on its own legs. But there is a danger in this righteous scorn. It is apt to be inferred that the novelist, because he is a novelist and because words are his stock-in-trade, cannot, *ipso facto*, be a good scenarist or director.

That is probably a valid objection in the case of novelists who learned their craft at a time when the progenitor of the film fan was glueing his eye to the slot of Edison's kinetoscope. But does it hold in the case of younger novelists, those of the post-war generation? We had our rag picture-books, our illustrated primers in big type, and our bedtime stories, just like the children of an earlier generation, but we had also our Saturday matinees, and the "rainy" films we cheered wildly at the local picture palace opened a new door upon the world of adventure and make-believe. It was much better fun to watch these movies (though we deplored the close-up kisses) than to decipher the hyphenated words of a story book,

which was probably concerned anyhow with unreal characters, witches and ogres and so forth. Thus it came about that our juvenile appetite for fiction was satisfied to a very considerable extent by what we saw on the screen. And, unknown to us, the medium used to tell these stories—a succession of moving images broken now and then by titles which we either skipped or chanted in unison—was doing much to heighten our pictorial sense and develop our visual faculties.

The effect of this involuntarily acquired training is evident to-day in a large number of modern novels, and perhaps it could also be traced in work done in other media by artists whose childhood belongs to the period of the cinema's growth. G. W. Stonier notes* that writers have now a greater sense of the visual property of images, and that the film close-up, with its substitution of the part for the whole, has led to a rediscovery by writers of the *pars pro toto* device in fiction. Being film-minded, whether they like it or not, they are obviously more disposed to think in terms of plastic images when they turn to scenario writing than those veteran fiction writers whose names are at present most sought after to garnish credit titles.

The next generation of novelists is almost bound to bring an even more highly developed visual sense to the business of novel-writing. The school cinema is already established, and one foresees that within a few years the use of film for instructional purposes will no longer arouse controversy; it will be taken for granted, and film lessons will be part of all curricula. That is bound to have its effect. Nor is there likely to be any relaxation of the hold which the commercial cinema has on its child public. It is realized now that children's cinemas and programmes designed for children can be made paying propositions, so that the formative influence of the purely entertainment film will probably grow more and not less potent. Walt Disney is said to have usurped the place so long held by Hans Andersen, and it is a safe prediction that the boy who learns his fairy tales from the Silly Symphonies instead of from the printed page will have in maturity a feeling for line and colour which his less fortunate predecessors either did not possess or had to acquire by conscious effort.

It is still rare to find a novelist who can speak the scenarist's language, and in most cases, like the traditional Englishman in a foreign country, he makes no attempt to understand it. He continues to use his own language and is gratified by the readiness with which the complaisant scenarist meets him half-way. When, however, there is a measure of bi-lingualism—if I may carry the metaphor a stage further—the cinéaste will no longer be contemptuous

* "Gog Magog" Dent, 1933.

when he hears that Mr. X, the best-selling novelist, has been given a film contract. It is conceivable that the artist who understands both idioms may be faced with the problem of deciding in which to express himself.

Novel or film? Words or sounds and images? The choice of the novel is indicated at present by factors which have little to do with the validity of film as an art medium—the collectivism which makes it impossible for the artist to remain in full control of his material from first to last, the high cost of production, and so forth. Suppose, however, that such factors are ruled out. Is the film potentially a richer medium of expression than the novel? Is it subtle enough to express intellectual ideas? Could it stand the strain put upon the more flexible structure of the novel?

Two limitations deriving from the nature of the medium at once present themselves—the physical inability of the spectator to keep his receptive faculties unblunted for longer than (say) two hours; and the momentariness of film, which makes it essential that the significance of the moving image (reinforced it may be, by sound) should be instantaneously apprehended by the spectator.

Pudovkin, writing of the silent films, holds that a film more than 7000 feet long “already creates an unnecessary exhaustion.” With the introduction of sound-film demands have been made on the spectator’s ears as well as on his eyes, and there has been an intensification of the strain, with the natural result that films tend to be shorter. It is, of course, possible to issue a film in parts, as was done in the case of Fritz Lang’s *Nibelungs* and (recently) in the case of Raymond Bernard’s *Les Misérables*; but I am inclined to agree with Pudovkin that “the film of deeper content, the value of which lies always in the impression it creates as a whole, can certainly not be thus divided into parts for the spectator to see separately one each week.”

He is, however, surely unduly pessimistic when he maintains that “the influence of this limitation of film length is yet increased by the fact that the film technician, for the effective representation of a concept, requires considerably more material than, let us say, the novelist or playwright.” Words which contain a whole complex of images are not so easy to come by as Pudovkin imagines. The evocation of atmosphere in the first chapter of “The Return of the Native” is not achieved by the use of a few significant phrases. Hardy, major artist though he is, requires pages to get his effect. An artist of similar stature using film as his medium could evoke the desired atmosphere more economically and with no diminution of effect by his arrangement of half a dozen sensitively chosen images. If he had sound at his command he could describe Egdon Heath and bring home its significance by an even sparser use of his material.

Large numbers of words, it should be remembered, have got rubbed down, and the writer is driven to seek fresh metal in workings which grow ever deeper and deeper, so that he is in no small danger of losing himself altogether in the subterranean labyrinth—the fate that appears to have overtaken Joyce. Chaucer could write gaily that the grass was green, and leave it at that, sure of his effect; the modern writer must search after adjectives to express the degree of its viridity. Filmic images, on the other hand, are not yet old enough to have lost their virtue, and film, despite its unnaturally rapid growth, has still about it much of that morning freshness which the novel had when Chaucer was writing the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*—rightly regarded as the first English novel. Film is new and untried; in filmic images one can still say that the grass is green and get away with it. So much for Pudovkin's contention.

Limitations imposed by physical factors must, of course, be reckoned with in other media. Film is not uniquely disadvantaged. The composer, for example, must bear in mind that after a certain period of concentration the interest of the audience will flag because its receptive faculties are tired and can no longer respond with the same alertness. More serious is the limitation that arises from the basic quality of the film—its momentariness. Everything depends on the immediacy of the contact between the moving patterns and the spectator's receptive equipment. If something is missed he cannot go back and pick it up as he could if he were reading a novel. Moreover, if he feels that he has missed something he is left with a vague sense of irritation which tends to mar his enjoyment. It will also affect the intensity of his concentration, for his mind cannot respond fully to the stimuli of new impressions if it is partly engaged in searching back to discover what it was that the director intended to convey by such-and-such an image or sound.

The film artist who wishes to preserve unimpaired the spectator's responsiveness to his film is thus placed in a difficult position. If he uses an ideological idiom which is easily understood but somewhat banal—the spray of blossom, the bird on the bough, the moon breaking through clouds—he lays himself open to the criticism that he lacks imagination and is deficient in filmic ideas. But, on the other hand, it is useless to introduce images which even the trained film-goer will probably not understand without a longer period of concentration than can be afforded by the interval between their appearance and disappearance on the screen.

The quality of momentariness is not essential to literature (nor to sculpture and painting), and it is therefore possible to express in writing subtleties which the film artist must regretfully eliminate from his work. The first reading of a page of Joyce or Proust may not suffice to put the reader in touch with the writer's

mind, but subsequent readings should resolve most of the obscurities. If one has the proper equipment, the time to spare, and determination, one is bound sooner or later to force a way through the entanglements that defend the citadel, and once that is captured one finds that the spoil within is adequate compensation for the ardours of the attack. And so it is with painting and sculpture. (Music and the ballet suffer, though to a less extent, from the same disability as film.) One may look at Genesis and not immediately understand Epstein's intention. A Picasso still-life may at first glance appear a grotesque blob of colour. But after a period of concentration—and artistic enjoyment, as Arnheim reminds us, is not mere receptiveness—one begins to understand the particular approach of these artists, the peculiar quality of their vision.

The difficulty with film is that it allows no period of concentration. Nor is it often practicable to see a film more than once or twice. We can read a page of print fifty times, or pay fifty visits to an art gallery, but facilities for viewing a film over and over again are denied to all but a privileged minority.

Inevitably the conclusion is forced upon the novelist who would wish to express his concepts in film that it is by its very nature a medium incapable of being at once subtle and intelligible. That conclusion would be modified if one could feel that the human brain is likely in the process of evolution to develop further. However well disposed he may be to film, the novelist will continue to use the written word when he wishes to express the more subtle workings of his mind, unless in the course of time there is an acceleration of the process by which the brain decodes, co-ordinates and transmutes into emotional and intellectual responses the messages flashed to it via the telegraphy of the senses. Film would, among a race of supermen, be the ideal medium of artistic expression. But unfortunately we are not supermen.

A copy of *The Great Train Robbery*, generally regarded as the first story film to be produced, has been discovered in Glasgow. In the course of a lecture on the history of the cinema to the Scottish Educational Cinema Society, C. A. Oakley made a passing reference to the film and, at the close, a teacher in the audience remarked that he had in his possession a film dealing with a train robbery. Further investigation revealed that it was a copy of the early film which had been purchased many years previously from a photographic dealer in Cork and had lain undisturbed in a garret. The film has been handed over to the British Film Institute through the Scottish Film Council and it is understood that the intention is to have copies made which may be available to film societies. The film, a super in length in its time, is about 800 feet long. The present condition of the copy will not permit of its being projected without frequent breakages occurring.

THE FUNCTION OF THE ACTOR

RICHARD GRIFFITH

ALTHOUGH A decade has passed since the promulgation of the theory of montage, film critics still bow down before that revelation as to the final word on the technique of a medium not half a century old. The theory of creative editing of sound and picture, indisputably the basis of cinematic construction, has become enshrined in a holy remoteness where it cannot be reached by dialectic. Montage and montage alone, we have been told ever since the days of Kuleshov, is the significant act in the production of a film, and compared with it every other technical device is either unimportant or irrelevant to the purposes of cinema.

Because of the regrettable supremacy of the star system, acting has long been the target for the most rancorous attacks of the film theorists. Acting is for them the symbol of the cinema's extended bondage to the theatre, its use a confession of inadequate knowledge of film resources. One can understand this dislike, since acting once so far usurped the function of other methods as to threaten to make the camera a means for the mere reproduction of stage plays. When the *raison d'être* of a film is the glorification of its star's personality, montage becomes superfluous and the picture loses all significance as an example of cinema. But to attribute this distortion to acting itself rather than to the star system is to judge a device by its systematic misuse. This obvious fallacy, however, has entrapped most of the critics with whose work I am acquainted. There are only a few who have considered deeply this problem of acting.

Of these few I shall take Paul Rotha as representative. In "The Film till Now," Rotha has argued the question so persistently and thoughtfully as to convince a large number of cinéastes. He contends, first, that acting is unnecessary in the montage film, and, second, that when employed it destroys filmic reality. He would have the director use, in place of professionals, type actors who happen to be physically suitable to the characters they impersonate, but who are wholly under the control of the director in the characterization of their rôles.

Rotha's plan is no doubt the best for the documentary films he now directs. In them he deals with the problems of masses of people. But if a film is to be concentrated upon the behaviour of one or two individuals, it seems to me that the employment of type actors cannot be considered adequate. Rotha thinks that "the inner reality of the characters, their thoughts, desires, lusts, and emotions, is revealed by their outward actions. . . . The camera itself is unable to penetrate the world before it, but the creative mind of the director can reveal in his *selection* of the visual images this intrinsic essence of life by using the basic resources of the cinema, *viz.*, editing, angle, pictorial composition, suggestion, symbolism, etc." (*vide* "The Film till Now," p. 270). It will be seen that Rotha thinks that it is the relationship of images, and not so much the images themselves, which carries the content of a filmic theme, and I agree. But the fact of relationship does not depend wholly upon the juxtaposition of images; it surely lies somewhat in the meaning of the images themselves? If, then, the director presents an image whose meaning is conveyed by the gesture, movement, or facial expression of a character, is it not necessary that these be reproduced by an actor whose technical training and creative ability have taught him to understand the expression of human personality? No, says Rotha, for "the so-called symptomatic actions of Freud, the small, almost unnoticed and insignificant actions of behaviour on the part of a person, are highly indicative of the state of his mind, and are of the utmost value, when magnified on the screen, for establishing an understanding of that state of mind in the audience. For this reason alone, it will be seen how essential it is for a film player to be his natural self, and how detrimental theatrical acting is to film purposes. It is the duty of the *director* to reveal the natural characteristics of his players and to build these, by means of editing, into a filmic exposition of personality . . ." ("The Film till Now," pp. 270-271). I think that here Rotha is setting the director a superhuman task. He is saying that human beings reveal themselves by their unconscious actions, and that the director must by editing synthesize them into personality. So he must, but where is he to get the images he is to edit? We are told they cannot be reproduced by acting, so the director must then, in the manner of Dziga-Vertov, wait until a member of his cast happens to betray himself by a "symptomatic action" and quickly photograph it, if the subject happens to be within camera range. With such methods, every film would be as long in production as those of Abel Gance. It seems to me that, unless they are acted, these unconscious actions could never be caught by the camera unless by chance. And why can they not be acted? If they are observable at all they are also capable of being reproduced. Nor is it important that the reproduction is artificial.

It is with the symbolic meaning of an action, rather than with its actuality in life, that the film is concerned.

If it be granted that a director must employ a professional actor to reproduce gesture, facial expression, and movement when they are important to the meaning of the individual image, let us pass to Rotha's second objection. In making a distinction between the realities of stage and screen he quotes Pudovkin: "The film assembles the elements of reality to build from them a new reality proper to itself; and the laws of time and space that, in the sets and footage of the stage are fixed and fast, are in the film entirely altered." On the stage, that is, an event seems to occur in the same length of time it would occupy in life. The camera, however, only records the significant parts of the event, and so the filmic time is shorter than the real time of the event—or, if cross-reference or repetition for emphasis is necessary, it is longer. The introduction of the theatrical device of acting, says Rotha, brings real time into the film, and so destroys filmic reality. In saying this, he is assuming that if acting is employed the screen time of a particular image will be prolonged so that the acting of an incident may have its full effect. That is an underestimation of acting, which can be instantaneous or prolonged, depending upon the particular effect toward which it is directed. Acting does not vitiate montage. It is only where there is no creative editing that acting, deprived of the meaningful interrelation of images, must compensate for the deficiency by literal representation of the relationships which it is the function of montage to indicate. Rotha's criticism springs from his mistaken belief that all acting must be like that of the stage, where it carries the entire burden of visual representation. Cinematic acting is relieved of that burden, and can concentrate upon contributing to the effect of a particular image, which effect montage relates to the images that come before and after.

Indeed, I have yet to see a film in which untrained type actors have been used with any success in the portrayal of character. *Storm Over Asia* and *Tabu* have been upheld as examples of the triumph of montage, but I scarcely think anyone will contend that the characters in these otherwise excellent films were well set forth. To me they seemed bare of all personality, stripped down to the essential characteristics which all human beings possess in common. Pudovkin's *Mother*, an attempted study of a particular human relationship, created two formless, contradictory personalities whom it is difficult to remember a few months after seeing the film. Pudovkin apparently tried to make up for the deficiencies of his actors by expressing their characters through inanimate objects as much as possible. If it were feasible to build a personality by photographing symbolically all those objects which are intimately and

meaningfully connected with him, then the problem of acting would be somewhat sensationally solved. But once let the director include a shot in which the character himself appears and it becomes necessary to represent the mannerisms of that character with careful attention to detail. The screen magnifies details. The representation of them cannot be left to an unskilled actor.

There remains one practical objection to cinematic acting with which we have not dealt. Granting that in a subordinate position acting legitimately contributes to the film, say its opponents, will any actor worthy of employment consent to such a subordination? Will he agree to give up his pre-eminent position to become the mere tool of the director—a tool whose sole use is to realize individual effects in scattered shots? I think that he will, if he has any understanding of cinematic mechanism. I have already distinguished between the film which deals with humanity in mass and that which portrays the personality of an individual. In the first there is no need for trained acting. In the second, however, an actor of experience and ability must be employed. And naturally the director will not call upon him to act out a single scene without explaining its relation to those which precede and follow. No, the director and the player will work out a harmonious conception of the character, embody it in the scenario, and the actor will realize his portion of the concept under the director's supervision. This is Pabst's method, and I cannot see why the conjunction of two creators, one supreme and one subordinate, should present any insuperable difficulty.

FRENCH EPIC-MAKING SATIRISED. Under cover of satire, Paul Morand protestingly reviews contemporary conditions in the French film industry in "The Epic-Makers" (7s. 6d. Lovat Dickson). He suggests in an introduction that in revealing "the wild-cat finance, the fantastic hotch-potch of nationalities, the preposterous sentiments and ridicule of every French institution," he is understating rather than enlarging the truth; and if we take him at his word, all cannot be well in the French film industry. Financial irresponsibility and a motley of nationalities are, of course, conditions not peculiar to the film colony of any one country; but it appears from M. Morand's account that in France at present the industry is largely in the hands of Central Europeans, Levantines and other foreign sharks, characterised in general by illiteracy. And M. Morand anxiously asks that "Frenchmen may be given a place, be it a small one, in the 'national' film industry." His satire is brisk and bristling and, like that in *Once in a Lifetime*, will not appear at all fantastic to those who know even a little of movie methods.

THE ARTIST AND THE FILM

ARTHUR SHEARSBY

UP TO the present, the contribution which modern art has made to the cinema has been practically negligible. With the exception of the Walt Disney cartoons, and all the trivial accessories of modernity in the shape of decoration and furnishing, the film, from the purely pictorial point of view, is very much in the position of the art of some seventy years ago. Neither modern clothes nor modern gags, helped out by the feeble imitations of Gauguin or the emasculated examples of Archipenko which adorn film interiors, can hide the essential poverty and deprivation which the cinema has suffered in its ruthless exclusion of the artist from its making.

With it all, this rigorous concentration of the film in the hands of commercially minded business men, it still remains a truism that the artist, and the artist alone, is the one person capable of transforming the howling, lusty incontinences of present-day cinema into the terms of a real art. The film is so peculiarly his medium, from the visual point of view. It offers him the means of bringing to life those special qualities of plastic form and conception, that sensibility to design, which are outwith the scope of stage presentation.

There are undisputed angles of the cinema from which the artist should be properly excluded, except in his photographic capacity. Drama, in its essential meaning of the presentation of human destiny by means of the individual, will always stand or fall by the fundamental purpose which gives it life, but there are still many, and much-neglected ways, in which the artist can bring an almost wholly-original offering to the screen.

Something of what may ultimately be accomplished can be glimpsed from the Disney cartoons, and, more recently, the French production, *Joie de Vivre*. Here we see the imagination of the painter at work in his own particular medium, the creation of significant form, divorced from the actual world of reality.

It would be rather futile to dispute at this date, in view of the vast popularity of Mickey Mouse, the immense influence which a

mere pictorial symbol can have on the imagination of the people. Mickey is a star of the first magnitude, a creature of fantasy, who can yet exercise an appeal denied to all but the greatest of actors. The *Joie de Vivre* cartoon, unsatisfactory as it is in many ways, is a still more cogent illustration of the effect which an abstract symbol can have on the imagination. A purely pictorial production, divorced from any attribute of the human, it yet manages to convey a wealth of strange and fundamental meaning.

A new approach, of course, would be needed on the part of directors if the modern experiments in the visual arts were to be properly incorporated into the film. The commercial Caliph, with his florid imagination, and entire lack of visual perception, would have to give way to the man who could weave the tragi-comedy of life out of the inter-relationship of masses and planes, of form, and eventually, colour.

A good deal of substantial support may be advanced for the belief that abstract cinematic art, when it comes, will be able to exert quite as catholic an appeal as the realistic drama of the present day. There is as vast a scope, within its symbolic bounds, as has been shown to exist between the blood-and-thunder crudities of melodrama and the more rare and subtle revelations of the higher drama. The intelligence of the film-going public is not the negligible factor which directors would have us believe. The average film at the present time is definitely created for the rapturous attentions of the adolescent, but there is no basis for the belief that the whole of the cinema-loving public is in a state of juvenility.

Certainly to the more mature in mind, abstract art, if allowed free access to the cinema, would have a tremendous appeal, and it is here that the fallacy of technique must be exposed. Technique is not, and never will be, art. Technique is applied thought, not creative thought, and it is creative thought which is so badly needed in the cinema of the present day. Technique can use the machine for all it is worth, but it cannot supply it with the life-giving material which is its real source of vitality.

The technical resources are all at hand, however. Only the necessary imagination is lacking, coupled with the type of mind which knows what it wants, and is determined to get it. It must, again, be the kind of imagination which can work in masses and planes, and visualize in the new medium.

Let us, for the sake of illustration, try to demonstrate how modern experimental art may help the cinema by the use of human material. Suppose we begin with a two-reel drama of the Edgar Allan Poe type, or the creation of a film round the story of H. G. Wells' "Invisible Man"?

The essential charm of such stories lies in their element of

pure fantasy. They have little relationship to flesh-and-blood realities, but are definite creations of the imagination. If an actor appeared (as inevitably he would) in such a grotesque or imaginative film, with an ordinary make-up, and surrounded by the paraphernalia of the star system, all sense of fantasy would be dispelled, for the essence of fantasy lies, as has been said, in its separation from the everyday world, and actors (being what they are) are very much of the world of every day. The illusion would have vanished, and it is here that modern art can come to the aid of naturalism.

Masks are the finest symbols obtainable for the elimination of the human, and the deeper conveyance of a sense of the unreal, and should be used extensively in experimental films. Light and shadow must also play a very important part, and an intelligent use of symbolic backgrounds, such as those of Miro, would be of invaluable help. Gesture and movement are of primary artistic importance, and only the actor who could express himself throughout the medium of his whole body could be utilized. The significance achieved by such mime has already been seen at its best in the Ballets Russes productions of "Choreartium" and "Les Presages."

The entire film need not be pure mime, but all talk would have to be incorporated into the movement, and not allowed to escape as an individual aberration from the complete design. Music and sound effects could be made by illusion to emanate from various points of the action. The endeavour would be, in other words, to generalize speech effects, and localize music and sound effects, using all such as definite accent notes, but not obtrusive attractions. Tremendous use could be made of the revolving light and wheel, and it would be expedient to employ an inclined stage of perhaps one in eight or one in ten. The essential purpose behind all such abstraction of the human would not be the elimination of the flesh-and-blood actor, as such, but the attempted intensification of symbolic effect.

The Greek play is perhaps a convincing illustration of the whole theme. We all know how the orthodox cinema would tackle such a play, and yet the essential quality in a Greek play is precisely this absence from naturalism. Its beauty is an elusive one of the spirit and the mind, and it is in this world of inner significances that the experimental cinema, with a developed capacity for fantasy, will perhaps find its widest scope.

The naturalistic play has its unquestionable place in the life of cinematic art. It presents the human problem in a comprehensible form to the mass of the people. Its appeal rests primarily on the personality of the actor, and the authenticity of the emotions he is interpreting, but the experimental cinema has the unique oppor-

tunity, if it so wills, of wandering into the rarer atmosphere of intensified life and thought, by means of abstract symbols. In such a world the actors themselves would be transformed into works of art, fitting as an integral part into the whole design. The abilities of the modern scenic painter, and not those of the mere property man, would be utilized, and the composer and writer would all bring their indispensable talents to the creation of such a real work of art. In the realm of painting, Surrealism could be employed for cinematic backgrounds, with its strange rendering of the things of the subconscious mind, its visualised thought.

The actors, in such a setting, would take on some of the mysterious, dream-like quality of the creations of Miro, Chirico, Fritz Van Den Berghe, Tchelitchew, or Edouard Goerg. They could move to the rhythm of such music as inspired the symphonic ballet, "Choreartium." The spoken word, when employed, should be free from definite accent, and used with tonal understanding and sympathy.

In the use of masks, it should be realized that they are not the funny things habitually used for the mediocre interpretation of comedy and tragedy, or, more commonly, on the fifth of November, but symbols of great artistic and æsthetic power, having been used in all ages and by all peoples to intensify the inner meaning of life.

To the inevitable complaint of the impossibility of such a cinema, there can be pointed, at the present time, the slender actualities of Disney and the Hoppin and Gross cartoon. Disney, although as yet in the illustrative stage, has pointed the way. If he could contrive to emerge from the comic-paper attitude to things, charming as it undoubtedly is, into the interpretation of ideas, he could be the greatest force on the screen. Certainly he has the necessary sense of the macabre and fantastic.

If it be advanced that the pictorially experimental cinema would have no public beyond the hysterical vapourings of the clique or the coterie, it can be replied that this possibility would all depend on the method of approach and the genuineness of the final effect. Certainly, at the present day, there is a growing unrest with the orthodox cinema, largely amongst its "middle-brow" patrons. It neither affords them the solid, three-dimensional satisfactions of the theatre, nor the unreal, imaginative appeal which modern pictorial art could bring to the screen. It is a half-way house, in which both mediums effect a sterile compromise. If it is to live at all as an integral part of the cultural life of the people it must, on the one hand, raise the naturalistic film into a real association with life, and, on the other, employ the resources of pictorial art, with its peculiar aptitude for the medium, to intensify the life of the imagination.

NEW TRENDS IN SOVIET CINEMA

MARIE SETON

THE RECENT Moscow Cinema Conference and the subsequent discussion made it quite obvious that the Soviet cinema has entered upon a new phase of its development. For four years there has been a crisis among the cinema artists, brought about by the transitional conditions of the Soviet Union itself. They failed time and again to find and reveal the spirit of the time before that spirit had evolved into something different. They were frightened of contradictions. More often than not the problems raised in the films were out of date before the pictures were released, or the theme of the pictures muddled because the scenarios had been given a fresh twist half-way through. For example, the last sequence of Pudovkin's *Deserter*—the unemployed's encounter with the police—was originally in the second reel. During 1934, however, coinciding with the increased stability of Soviet life, the film industry got "out of the wood" and produced several pictures with interesting new trends, and one, *Chapeyev*, which can rank beside *Potemkin* and *Mother* as characteristic of its period.

The three days conference served to clear the air by giving public expression, not to say official status, to a number of thoughts which were in the process of turning into facts. It also gave the second generation of directors and the less known cinema artists an opportunity to formulate their theories, which were more often than not in opposition to those of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko. They in turn modified or threw out a number of their theories, essential in their day, which had been hitherto generally accepted as characteristic of Soviet film. For example, the subordinate position of the professional actor which characterized the work of Pudovkin, and the subordination of the individual character to the mass which was a corner stone of Eisenstein's scenarios.

The most constructive element of the conference was the frankness with which all expressed themselves. Directors from the national minority republics like Georgia did not hesitate to say that they were too often considered as provincials by the Moscow artists;

actors to assert that their suggestions and opinions were arrogantly swept aside by directors; and Leningrad artists to maintain that the Moscow studios were badly organized, supercilious in tone and blandly indifferent to the welfare of the students graduating from the State Institute of Cinematography. For three days criticism raged fast and furious.

The most destructive element of the conference was that under the guise of criticism there was a deal of backbiting, particularly on the part of the second generation of directors, who often showed themselves intolerant, arrogant and ungrateful towards the pioneer directors who, during an epoch of ruined economy, had raised a number of basically important theoretical signposts. That the newcomers should criticise and revise the early theories of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko, shows the virility with which they come to the cinema; but when several young directors of talent unlit by genius began to belittle Eisenstein and Pudovkin with personally rude quotations from Gogol and Georges Sand, and set themselves up as inquisitors, then they showed themselves to be suffering from a disease known in revolutionary circles as Marxian measles. By contrast the Communist Party representative, Dinamov, belittled no one and showed a much more profound understanding of the creative artist's psychology than some of the budding geniuses showed towards each other. His speech can be summarized in the words of Marx, "that all emancipation leads back to the human world, to relationships, to men themselves." Therefore, the main tasks of the Soviet cinema artists in 1935 are:—

(1) To reinstate Beauty.

The beauty which emerges from ideas and not from single sequences, beautiful in themselves but related only as illustrations to the theme or as symbols of ideas.

(2) For artists to feel the epoch in their blood—as Eisenstein and Pudovkin felt it when they made *Potemkin* and *Mother*, for "the voice of the epoch must ring in the voice of the hero."

(3) The hero to be unafraid of burning passions.

¶ In order that the Soviet cinema may have this passion the directors (as has not always been the case) must only take those subjects with which they are in love. They must take root in the subject as trees take root in the soil.

(4) To create individual characters.

People with real and often contradictory natures, not puppets in black-and-white pulled by the string of ideas stated but not analysed. Contradictions in life and in people must be seen and understood; and above all the enemy, like the hero, must be shown in the round.

(5) To create actors with great passions, to portray such

characters so that they live; for, said Dinamov, "you cannot base your cinema entirely on the use of natural types, any more than it can be wholly a documentary cinema."

(6) To have a subject in every picture, for the mass has its subjects and its leaders. *Mother*, *Storm Over Asia* and *Chapeyev* are the main line of the Soviet film; in them there are heroes through whom the action as thought and the thought as action is manifested.

(7) To create heroes who must think so that their thoughts reach the public.

(8) To create heroes who must feel, otherwise the subject will remain incomplete. Moreover, characters must have main emotions, for "an eagle could not fly with a host of little wings."

None of these problems can be solved without

(9) a clear style and a perfect technique.

It is not quantity, but quality that counts. "In the Golden Age of Greece the statues were of normal size; only in an age of decay did quantity replace quality. Style is the artist's hand-writing"—and the Soviet cinema has many styles and theories: Eisenstein's the intellectual, Dovzhenko's the poetic, Pudovkin's the passionate and emotional.

(10) The final problem of the film workers is to remake cinema consciousness. The struggle is not so much a fight against different theories as to create a definite and positive new style. In fact, an ever-evolving and developing style.

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The only film which has shown a mature development of many of these new trends is *Chapeyev*, the first sound picture of two brothers Vassilev. They adapted the scenario from the book by Furmanov with the use of historical records.

Chapeyev is the only recent Soviet film with any large comprehension of men as they are in life. Its beauty will last because it is not "fashionable" in its thought or its treatment. It is full of the spirit by which an epoch can be seriously judged. It is not like *Nights of St. Petersburg* or *Storm*, pictures which show a revival of interest in the classical and the beautiful; or *The Jolly Boys* (*Jazz Comedy*), which is full of formal beauty that degenerates often into the pretty-pretty. Though the theme of *Chapeyev*, the struggle of a small detachment of revolutionary soldiers under the command of Chapeyev, is a page from early Soviet history recorded in a novel by Chapeyev's actual commissar, Furmanov, the characters and events are essentially seen through the eyes of 1934-35. Had Eisenstein or Pudovkin taken this theme in 1925, instead of *Potemkin* and *Mother*, they would in their separate methods have treated it as an heroic mass drama of civil war, ending in the death of all concerned. Made to-day it is an analysis of character, the political

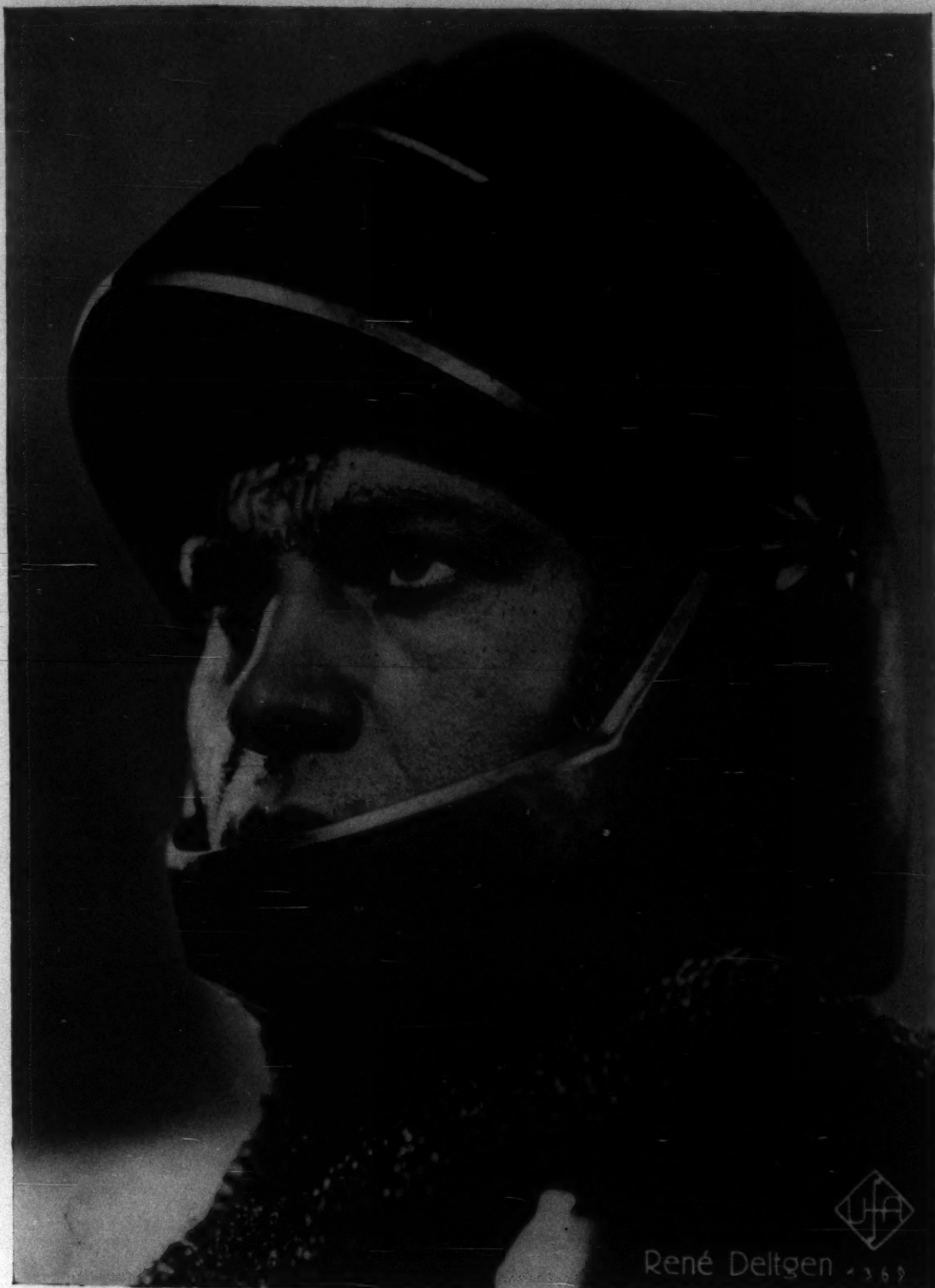
character of the battle and the psychological character of a small group of soldiers who, because of their thoughts and emotions, represent the masses.

Chapeyev is a more personally passionate film than any made before. Tenderness and love and humour, a really delicious humour, are as integral elements of the story as its courage and heroism; they are the form through which life is expressed as opposed to certain and oncoming death. The theme depends entirely upon character. There is nothing symbolic about the six or eight leading characters, soldiers, peasants and a woman talking backchat, singing, loving and fighting to the death. There is nothing conventionally heroic about the hero, Chapeyev, cursing, throwing chairs about, puzzled; at first politically illiterate. Some peasants ask him whether he is a Communist or a Bolshevik; he scratches his head, not knowing what they mean, and answers, "I'm an internationalist." Even the White officer is human; he loves Chopin, he is never grotesque, he is an enemy to respect.

Chapeyev is undoubtedly as much the actors' as it is the directors' picture; and that is a new development in the history of Soviet films. Babotchkin's portrayal of Chapeyev is an amazing piece of work, a beautiful performance. He has through intensive research wormed his way into the commander's skin. Without such a performance *Chapeyev* would be nothing, for the main subject is how Chapeyev and his men think and feel and accordingly act in a number of historical events. Theirs is an optimistic tragedy.

The style of the picture is synthetic. The synthesis of the great early films tempered with the more personal elements which were first manifested in 1932 in Ermler's and Utkevitch's *Counterplan*. It is much quieter in rhythm than the early pictures; it has few tricks either of photography or montage. There is a certain amount of symbolism all through the film, introduced through several well-known folk songs; for example, towards the end Chapeyev sings the eighteenth-century song of the Decemberists, "Ermerk," which tells the tale of the conqueror of Siberia, who is drowned as he tries to swim the river. It suggests and anticipates Chapeyev's own fate. But on the whole the subject is more revolutionary than the form, or rather, the treatment of the subject is more important than the technique employed when estimating the value of *Chapeyev* in the historical development of the Soviet cinema.

THE COVER ILLUSTRATION is from the new Ufa film *Abel mit der Mundharmonika*, directed by Max Pfeiffer and featuring Karl Ludwig Schreiber.



René Deltgen in Germany's
new version of the life
of Joan of Arc.
Scenario: Gerhard Menzel.

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Chapayev is a more personally predominant film than any made before. Friendship and love and humor, a really delicious humor, are as integral elements of the story as its courage and heroism; they are the form through which life is expressed as opposed to certain and impending death. The theme depends entirely upon character. There is nothing symbolic about the six or eight leading characters, soldiers, peasants and a woman talking backchat, singing, loving and fighting to the death. There is nothing conventionally heroic about the hero, Chapayev, cursing, throwing chairs about, punched, at first politically illiterate. Some peasants ask him whether he is a Communist or a Bolshevik; he scratches his head, not knowing what they mean, and answers, "I'm an internationalist." Even the White officer is human; he loves Chopin, he is never grotesque, he is an enemy to respect.

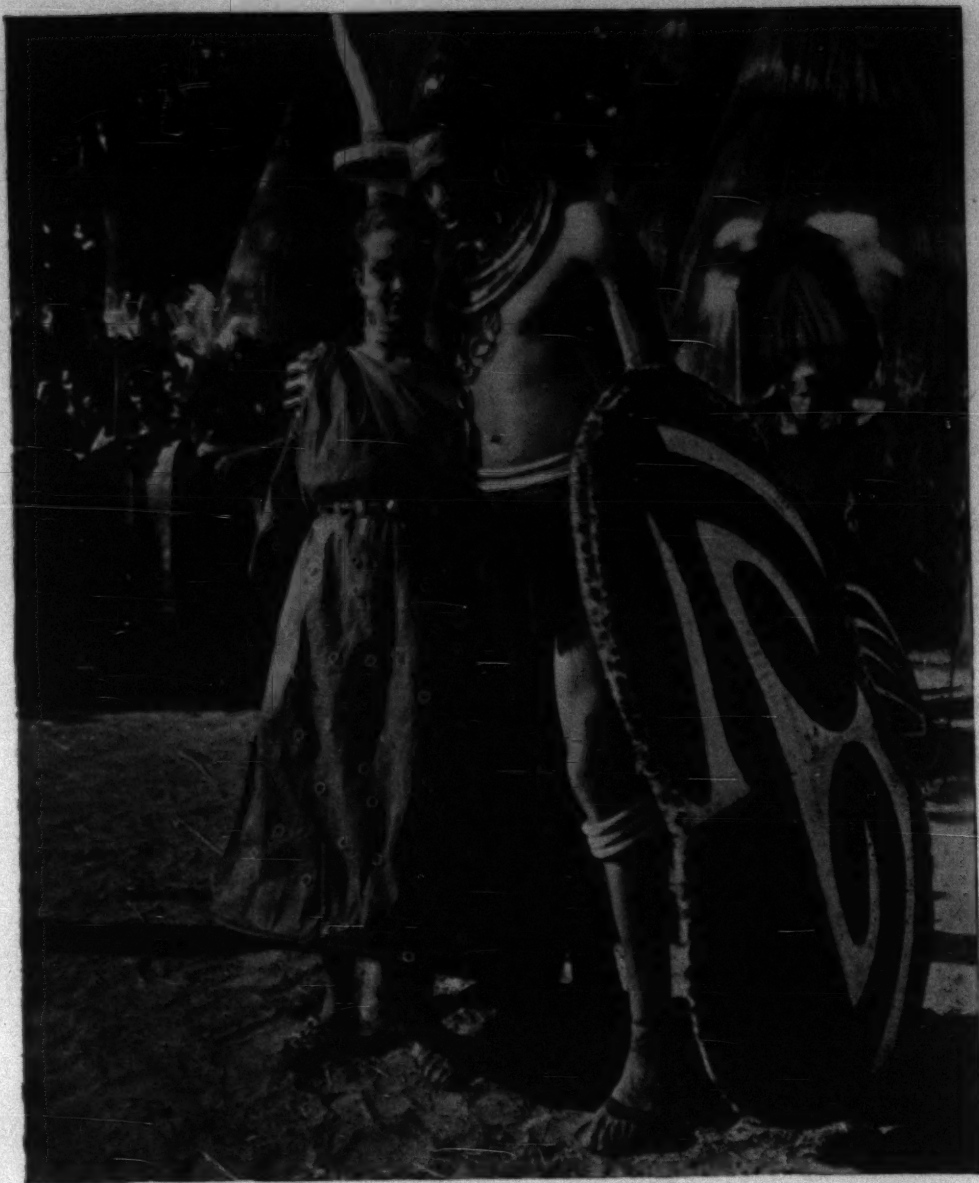
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THE COVER ILLUSTRATION is from the new Ufa film *Abel mit der Wandermühle*, directed by Max Pfeiffer and featuring Karl Ludwig Schreiber.



René Deltgen in Germany's
new version of the life
of Joan of Arc.
Scenario: Gerhard Menzel.



Paul Robeson and Nina Mae McKinney
in "Sanders of the River," a London Films
production based on the Edgar Wallace
stories of Commissioner Sanders.
Direction: Zoltan Korda.

THE FILM ABROAD

SWEDEN

DURING 1934 the Swedish film industry entered upon a new phase of production activity and a determined effort is being made to meet the competition of foreign produced films in the home market. There is, on the one hand, an endeavour to produce fine films comparable to those of the great days of the Swedish cinema, and on the other an attempt to shut out all inferior foreign pictures. Sweden has no quota system, and the proportion of Swedish to foreign pictures shown depends entirely on the power of the former to compete in the home market.

Sweden is a country with a reputation for quality in industry, and just as other Swedish industries owe the high standard of their products to the skill of their craftsmen, so the film industry has at its disposal a company of highly skilled technicians. In addition to the experienced producers, there is growing up a generation of younger artists who, untrained in routine, have imagination and enthusiasm in abundance.

During 1934 Sweden for the first time took part in international film contests, being represented at both Vienna and Venice. At Vienna the Swedish film *En Stilla Flirt* (*A Mild Flirt*) won a first prize. Gustav Molander, its producer, is one of the oldest and most reliable artists in the Swedish cinema. He received his early schooling in the glorious epoch of Sweden's silent films when he worked as assistant to, among others, Victor Sjöström. In particular the technique of his film is notable. The photography is by Ake Dahlquist, foremost among Swedish cameramen, who will be remembered for his work in *En Natt*, also produced by Molander.

A Mild Flirt has been a great success in Sweden. In spite of the fact that Sweden is the native country of Greta Garbo, a good Swedish film is generally a greater commercial success than a Garbo film. In *A Mild Flirt* the principal part was taken by Tutta Rolf, who, early this year, left for Hollywood, where she is under contract with Fox.

The Swedish Film Association, Svenska Filmsamfundet, was founded in 1933, and last year had the task of awarding its prize medal for the first time. It was given to one of the year's greatest commercial successes, *Karl Fredrik Regerar*. This is the story of a Swedish agricultural workman who attains a high position in the Government, and it has a recognisable parallel in modern Swedish

politics. A medal was awarded to Sigurd Wallen for his rendering of the role of Karl Fredrik.

In addition to his strenuous work as director of his theatre and as an actor, Gosta Ekman has found time for three film performances. The chief of these is the title role in *Swedenhielm*, from the play by the Swedish author, Hjalmar Bergman. It is a story of a scientist who, after many disappointments, at last wins the Nobel Prize; and it gives illuminating expression to the characteristic national qualities of the Swede—honesty, simplicity, faithfulness and stubbornness. The other two films in which Gosta Ekman has appeared are farcical comedies and, chiefly because of his contribution, have become great successes.

Swedish cinema has three young producers who, during the past year, have made good with original films. The youngest of them is Lorens Narmstedt, who made *The Atlantic Adventure*. Per-Axel Branner, the second of the young directors, suddenly broke off a stage career in order to make films. His *Young Hearts* is the story of a group of girls of about sixteen years of age brought together from different parts of the country to spend the summer in a country rectory for their confirmation—young people with sensitive minds, susceptible to trifles, but with growing spirit and developing initiative. Branner has made a few other films, including a new version of *The Song of the Flame Red Flower*, from the novel of the Finnish author, Johannes Linnankoski. About ten years ago Mauritz Stiller made a picture on the same theme which was an international success. The new version may not have the same success, but it has much of the quality which made Stiller's film outstanding. Branner is a versatile director of great promise. The third of these promising new directors is Ivar Johansson. He prefers to produce his films in surroundings full of strength and grandeur: the wild rivers and sweeping valleys of the north of Sweden, as in *Hälsingar*; or the outmost barren islands of the archipelago, swept by wind and wave, as in *Surfs*. His characters live, and are one with their surroundings, and the conflicts grow up out of the *milieu* in a way that is not common in films. He sketches in the landscape and its people with broad powerful strokes, and his characters have space and horizon behind them.

These are the most important of the thirty pictures which Sweden has produced during the past eighteen months. Other films have been comedies intended for popular consumption. Serious work in other spheres has not been lacking, however. Prince Wilhelm, author of a number of plays and travel books, has produced a full-length film about the lighthouse people of the west coast, and also several short films for which he has supplied the commentary. An increasing interest is being taken in short films, and the leading

producing company has a special department for them, with four directors. Sweden is beginning to understand the value and importance of the documentary film.

RAGNAR ALLBERG.

AMERICA

THE SHEEN of the surface photography gets slicker, light glances off the edge of polished surfaces like star-bursts, there is a steel-edged sharpness to the black-and-white magic of what a ten-thousand-dollar Mitchell sound camera can do—and ground noises have been eliminated from the sound so that technically one might say that the American movie is flawless.

But one does not say that because the emotional content remains as sterile as ever. One cannot forgive this vacuity of ideas for the devastating sleekness of the mechanics of photography and sound. The critics have sung the praises of Vidor's *The Wedding Night*, which had the novelty of the Connecticut tobacco fields as a setting but little else. Otherwise it is the old triangle, with a primitive base and a sharp apex lifted by the gargantuan stature of Gary Cooper, a good actor. Anna Sten hasn't done anything in Hollywood to approach her performance in *Brothers Karamazov*. The last "touch" in *The Wedding Night* is true Vidor and good Vidor. In *Our Daily Bread* the intention is more laudable than the execution of it. For one thing, Vidor must have looked too long at *Turksib*. What good is a social document if you are going to drag in such well-worn dramatic clichés as the tough guy who gives himself up so that the reward money can be used to further the co-operative farm? And why the fuzzy-haired blonde to vamp the husband away from the faithful and serving wife and thereby jeopardize the success of the co-operative by luring away the farm's organizer? A co-operative farm has real problems to meet—they concern Government or State subsidies, united front of workers and farmers, soil, seed, irrigation and the economic system which will or will not allow it to function. What is this nonsense about blondes and mock-heroics? The one fine shot of a little globe of water spurting up from the earth around the tender shoot—as lyrical as Pudovkin at his best—should have shown Vidor the true forte of the film. Yet *Our Daily Bread* made my companion cry, and was awarded a gold medal by I.C.E. Maybe it doesn't take much (along such a "daring" line of thought, *i.e.* that the soil is the mother of man, and that man should return to it to reclaim his living and his self-respect) to touch a world sated with artificialities. But the picture is a failure at the box-office in America. The mass of people prefer to be numbed with the narcotic of the trivial average Hollywood film. A film like *Our Daily*

Bread brings them too close to the harsh reality of their own lives. That's not what movies are for, for them.

Movies are for Jean Harlow and William Powell in *Reckless*. Based on a recent newspaper scandal of a Broadway torch-singer who married a millionaire playboy, who died soon after the marriage, mysteriously, too, they say. She was never accepted by his snooty family, and when her child was born there was a long battle in the courts for the custody of the child, and finally she repudiated a million-dollar settlement so she could have the child, and went back to Broadway. The film version of this delightful pastiche is as brittle as a pane of glass, and as transparent. Also, as emotional. Harlow finally sets her critics right that she can't act. The dialogue is pompous and recited, and one longs for a time-out period when the director would have allowed at least some of the notorious Harlow sex appeal to creep in, even if it meant discarding the story into the ash-can where it belongs. But it will make a fortune.

The sputtering of Frank Morgan in *Naughty Marietta* makes that film tolerable for the few comic moments when he is on—otherwise it is a beautiful bore. *Star at Midnight* is a third carbon copy of *The Thin Man* (a good mystery film—but lamentably destined to be the first of a new series of wisecracking whodunit pictures). *Sequoia* has a few good animal shots but much too much insupportable poutings by Jean Parker, who plays a wild, untamed girl of America's great outdoors. Slopping up Nature with a lot of S.P.C.A. goo. Only when the proximity of the actors to the animals has been removed does something of the nobility of the deer and the puma seep through. Otherwise it's a film for Boy Scouts.

The foreign film situation in America is all Britain. One Soviet film, *Chapayev*, was a success in New York. (The new Kozintsev-Trauberg picture, *Youth of Maxim*, has just opened.) Among French films, only Yvonne Printemps' lavender and old lace version of *Camille* was successful, and that only in New York. *La Maternelle* and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* are fighting with the ubiquitous censors for their lives. Fritz Lang's *Liliom* was a failure here. But Gaumont-British and London Films are spreading all over the country, and two films of Gaumont's, *The Iron Duke* and *Unfinished Symphony*, and London Films' *Scarlet Pimpernel* have been very successful. So were *Chu Chin Chow* and *Power* (*Jew Süss*). And others. It's an "invasion by the red-coats" all over again, the American distributors are saying. Britain retaliating for 1776 and 1812. G.-B. and London Films may yet do it. Their forthcoming schedules will give Hollywood no little competition, and Hollywood is blithely stepping right into it by loaning out its players, writers, etc., for G.-B. and London Films.

Britain is more favourably situated, with regard to America and the world market, than ever before. If she makes the most of it, not

only will she have usurped Germany's former first place as a laboratory of the cinema, but she will split up the world monopoly no longer so impregnably held by the moguls of Hollywood.

HERMAN G. WEINBERG.

GERMANY

"AT LAST the moment has arrived when the Reichs Government is in a position to play a vigorous part in assisting the development of the German film industry, by making definite contributions of an intellectual, economic and material nature." This was the message Dr. Goebbels delivered at the inauguration of the Reichs Film Archives, which has been formed for the preservation of specimens of all the great films ever produced in Germany.

"Before the end of this year," said Dr. Goebbels, "five films of undeniable classical status, representative of German film art at its best, will be on display. They are now in preparation. And the Government will see to it that the producers will be spared undue worry concerning the expenditure of time and money.

"Already the Government has gone a long way to prepare a better future for the film industry, and has provided a material basis to work from, as, for instance, through the establishment of the Film Bank, the relaxation of the censorship, the creation of the Reichs Institute of Film Drama, and finally through the award of the Reichs Film prize to stimulate and encourage creative and artistic achievement."

Dr. Goebbels assured his hearers that he had "not the slightest intention" of tutoring the producers nor of hampering their freedom in any direction. "No artist," he said, "can work under the lash of a taskmaster."

Robert Herlth and Walter Röhrig, famous for the creation of the architectural splendour of many early German films, will be responsible for the settings of *Amphitryon*, now being produced by Ufa at Neubabelsberg. Reinhold Schunzel will direct, from his own scenario. Fritz Arno Wagner is camera-man, and the music has been written by Franz Doelle.

Gustav Ucicky has directed *Joan of Arc*, from a scenario by the poet Gerhard Menzel. The photography is by Gunther Krampf, and Röhrig and Herlth are again responsible for the settings, which are conceived on a vast scale.

German and French versions are to be made of the musical feature, *Make Me Happy*, which Arthur Robison is directing. The music is by Theo Mackeben.

Pola Negri takes the principal part in *Mazurka*, a Cine-Allianz production directed by Willi Forst.

THE SCENARIO

MAY I be allowed to comment on your editorial in the last issue dealing with the scenario of *The Private Life of Henry VIII*? This gives me an opportunity to hit out at your brave *Quarterly* in a manner befitting its policy, which is belligerent and stimulating.

My cardinal sin, according to your gospel, is that I deny any knowledge of the meaning of "true cinema." But in the introduction to *Henry VIII* I took the precaution of adding "whatever that is," and I regret to say that your editorial does not take us any further in the way of a definition. Indeed, no. It merely tells us that film form is a pattern laid up in Heaven, like Plato's "Republic," and that we are as far from it to-day, with perhaps two exceptions—Chaplin and Clair—as ever we were.

You say that if the scenarist produces something on paper which is afterwards re-created in celluloid, he is being denied his "rightful recognition as progenitor of the production," or that the director, alternatively, is being given credit for creative gifts to which he is not entitled. I contend that, in the present state of cinema, that is the most abysmal nonsense. This is not a question of credits—and Heaven knows enough people gain credit for doing nothing at all—but of the first principle of film form. Not many principles, but one principle, which is this: that the content and pattern of the film are determined by the idea, and that the originator of that idea is, *ipso facto*, the creator of the film.

In our muddled and unformed cinema, for which no one has yet succeeded in establishing any principles, as Aristotle did for the drama, the idea is at present contained in the scenario. I do not claim any special eminence for the scenario, and as a basis for a non-literary affair like a picture I stated plainly enough in my introduction that it was suspect. And so it is, and will be for many years to come, till a director can read a script as a musician reads a score.

But can you hazard a guess when films will be the single, individual creation of one person? Would criticism be worth a rap which totally ignored present conditions, namely, the organised regimentation of many talents, and proceeded on the assumption that, unless one artist were the only begetter, the film was a failure, was not worthy of serious attention?

Shakespeare is regarded as no less an artist because he borrowed from Plutarch, and Sterne is no less a wit because he stole from Burton. In fact, you are hopelessly old-fashioned if you suppose that a work of art is only perfect if it is conceived and carried out by one individual mind. Of course, it *may* be. Negro and Aztec art shows that it was, and how perfect it was.

But in the cinema we are still primitives, when one man is as good as another in practice or criticism. And in your passion for technical rectitude you seem to have missed the point of my scenario series altogether, just as a critic can go on talking till he is blue in the face about filmic form or "expressive sound" and still tell you nothing whatever about the film, what happened in the film, what was its intention, what beauties it presented, what knowledge it showed, and so forth. (And parenthetically, can you tell me of any sound which is not "expressive"?)

You say that without an architect to inspire the draughtsmen and instruct the builders, a building would lack æsthetic harmony. That is true. But who is the architect of a film if he is not the scenarist, and that being so, why should he not be given his rightful importance in the filmic scheme?

I come to the rescue of this neglected species and a damaging lump of Edinburgh rock is flung at me by *Cinema Quarterly*. I deal with what is instead of what will be, and I am a traitor to the best in cinema. You say it is "idle to talk of the scenario as having significance," and yet, in Mack Schwab's interesting article on Chaplin, in the same issue, he writes: "His (Chaplin's) script is completely worked out, key-shot by key-shot."

Inevitably. It is sheer academicism to suppose that Chaplin, any more than Beethoven, carries everything in his head on the score that, all being visual, or all being harmonics, no scheme of notation is necessary. On the contrary, *that* is the significant thing, the ground-plan, the foundation, the idea rising in imagination from the page.

However, this must be intensely boring to your readers, and I must not inflict myself on them. But are you sure that in the severe cold of actual practice your many theories would stand the test? I myself have had a long apprenticeship in critical theory of films, and have stated them in papers not unworthy to be placed side by side with *Cinema Quarterly*, and yet I distrust a great deal of what I said, and marvel that I was so distant from reality. And I question profoundly whether the "full creative control" you demand of directors is not just a pattern laid up in Edinburgh, for students, scholars and watchers in the skies, and not for the striving mortal in the studio fighting the devils of light, sound and mischance.

ERNEST BETTS.

INDIA ON THE SCREEN

INDIA having taken the place of gunmen on the screen, the inevitable question is being asked. The word Art is being whispered, though God forbade that it should ever be applied to the gunmen sequence. But India . . . atmosphere . . . Flaherty has gone out to spend a year or two photographing large chunks of atmosphere.

It is unfair to generalize. Films that strive to be instructive ought not to be compared with those that are made solely for diversion. Both *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* and *Clive of India* are in the latter category, though they mark an advance from the crude *Son of India* of Ramon Novarro and the terrible early Kiplings.

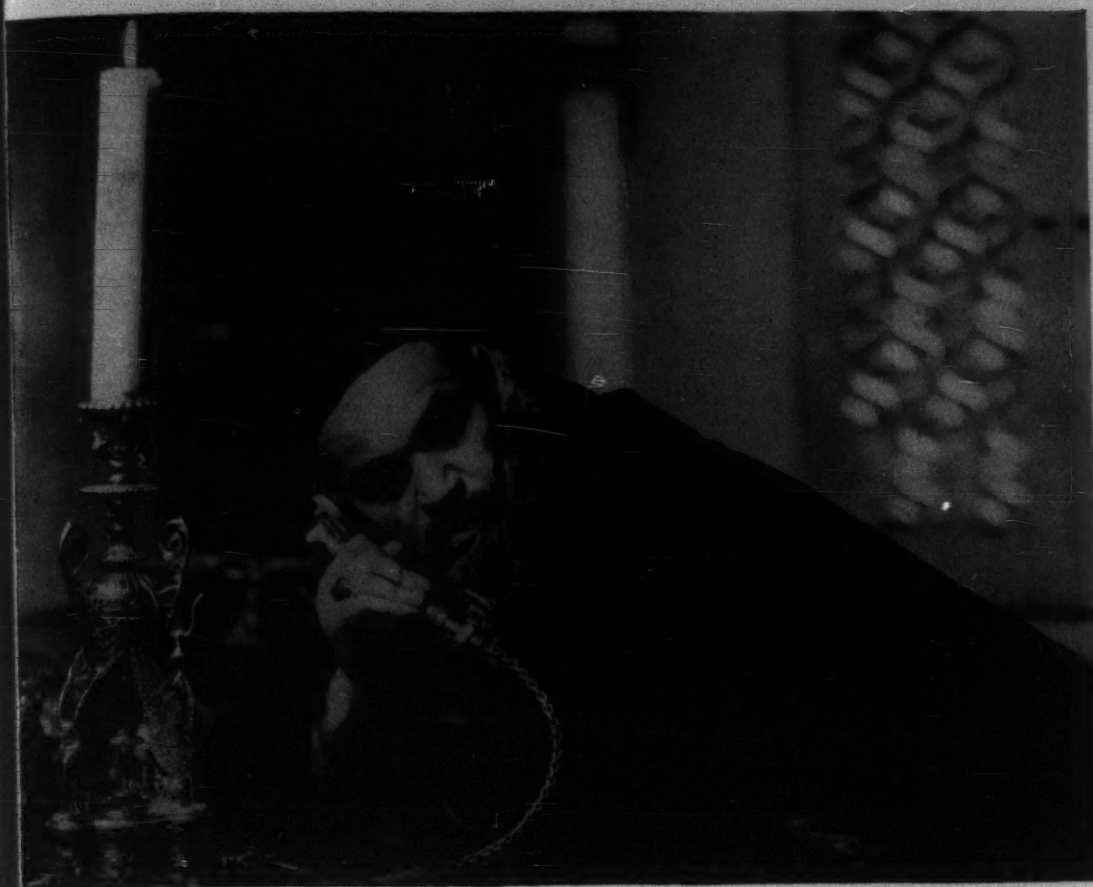
If you attempt to make an analysis, you will find that *Bengal Lancer* is really a Wild West picture in an Indian setting—a minimum of Indian setting, for the North-West Frontier is nothing more than the hills of Hollywood with Gary Cooper and Aubrey Smith capering about them. It forms superb entertainment.

Clive of India is essentially domestic—a love story—though, coming after *Bengal Lancer*, it was expected that the conqueror of India should never leave his elephant unless it were to blow up half India. Not one second of that picture was made in India. It was purely diversional. The atmosphere was an effect.

Flaherty's methods are different. He gives you the real thing. Generally in immense slabs. As an instruction, it is of value. He contrives also to make of it a work of art. But to attempt to combine it with a story would be to court disaster. I prefer the simple devices of a Chaplin. Thirteen years ago, when he made *A Woman of Paris*, Charlie Chaplin showed us a girl waiting for a train. The train came in. He did not show us the charging, tearing express; but only the flicker of lights from the carriage windows on the girl's anxious face—firstly rapidly, then slowly, until the train stopped. "I did that with a piece of cardboard," he told me.

This will have to be borne in mind when *Kim* comes to be made. Irving Thalberg discussed it with me when I was in Hollywood. He wanted me to stay on and tackle it; but, alas! my other engagements did not permit this. When, however, it is undertaken, it will have to be decided whether the atmosphere or the story is of greater consequence on the screen: the two cannot be combined as effectively in this new medium as they are in the book. Essentially, it is an atmosphere book. But there is a story, and if a diversional film is to be made, the atmosphere will have to be relegated to effects.

There is happily a public—a very large public—for both types of film, as the astounding and deserved success of such a production as *Forgotten Men* shows. There we had a neatly assembled jig-saw of



Fritz Kortner as
Abdul Hamid in
"Abdul the Damned."
Production: B.I.P.
Direction: Karl Grune.

Fred Barnard's illustration of
Mr Micawber in an early
edition of
"David Copperfield,"
with a still of W. C. Fields
as the same character from
the M.-G.-M. film.
The character studies suggest
"an animation of the original
magazine engravings"—
Campbell Nairne.





Cicely Courtneidge in
"Me and Marlborough,"
a new historical film
being completed by
Gaumont-British at
Shepherd's Bush.
Direction: Victor Saville.

war atmosphere, cemented together by the reminiscent voice of Sir John Hammerton. Greta Garbo in *The Painted Veil* ran for two weeks at the Empire; *Forgotten Men* for twelve weeks at the Rialto.

R. J. MINNEY.

DISNEY EXHIBITION

TECHNICALLY, the recent Disney Exhibition at the Leicester Galleries, London, was a success. It was arranged in a simple and straightforward manner, and with such a wealth of detail that the spectator (with the exception of the young person) was given a complete idea of the manner in which Disney and his staff of three hundred workers manage to produce thirteen Mickey Mouse cartoons and thirteen Silly Symphonies annually. It was so comprehensive, in fact, that one was immediately struck with a sense of the ease and simplicity with which it could all be copied, given, of course, a certain standard of ability and the essential capital.

Artistically, however, the show was second-rate. In an adjoining room a number of modern French paintings were on view, and the contrast was illuminating and compelling. The paintings were alive and vivid and expressive of their age. They contained those qualities of form and rhythm, of colour and design with which the contemporary artist captures his meaning. They impinged on one's consciousness, so to speak, and challenged one's acceptances. Disney, with his clever box of conjuring tricks, could produce nothing with half so much vitality. His language is the language of another plane of thought and imagination.

Pictorially speaking, the whole point of the Disney show lay in this very opportune experiment in comparison. The animated cartoon, without a doubt, is still only in its rudimentary stages, although it is capable of developing into a vital branch of cinematic art, given the necessary will and power of direction. It is a first-rate medium for the special qualities of the painter, apart from the mere dexterous handling of mechanism.

We all recognize and appreciate the humanity and life of Mickey Mouse. It must be borne in upon the inelastic brains of our film producers that the animated cartoon, as a special branch of cinema, has come to stay, that the people, as a whole, are enthusiastic about it, and that, given the necessary stimulus, it can yet reach unimagined heights of artistry and meaning.

Disney's technique has almost reached the apex of its power. He continues to give us something which is clever and funny, decorative,

and, on occasion, sinister; but he is not nearly within reach of his maturity as an artist. His imagination will have to expand, and his mind to grow, before he can yet produce an all-round, satisfying work of art.

It may be contended, with reason, that the majority of people prefer Mickey as he is, devoid of the artistic trappings which might detract from his naturalism. There is no earthly reason, apart from priggish presumption, why they should be deprived of the antics of the little fellow. He is cute and very winning, full of unexpected tricks, and able to play with the stabilities of life in a manner which pleases their careworn sense of responsibility.

We hope, however, that there is nothing carping or superior, or savouring of boards and baggy trousers, in the suggestion that there is still tremendous delight and meaning to be had from the animated cartoon, when developed from its purely pictorial angle. We have, we think, a right to these adult artistic satisfactions so sadly catered for. Must it be inevitable that financial considerations should obtain a stranglehold on this, as on every other, branch of cinema?

In this country, of course, the animated cartoon has not even reached the lusty, infantile stage of Micky Mouse, but there is no lack of artistic material in the country. With the co-operation of a few artists and art-schools, under the imaginative control of someone with an understanding of the medium, and, of course, the indispensable technical advisers, something could be built up which would be a definite challenge to the artistic timidities of the commercial cinema. Mickey and his playful eccentricities would not be smothered under the stifling mantle of Highbrowism. From this specialized angle of the film, there is room for Mickey as for the wider visions and more imaginative conceptions of the painter and poet.

ARTHUR SHEARSBY.

NEW BOOKS

JEW SÜSS (London, Methuen, 5s.) is the second of a series of scenarios which Ernest Betts is editing. It fulfils a useful purpose in showing the student what part the scenario actually plays in production, and by comparison with the original novel, what incidents in the book the adaptors considered most suitable for treatment on the screen. It is illustrated (though we could wish more fully) with stills and with sketches prepared by Alfred Junge for the decor.

MY OWN STORY. By Marie Dressler (London, Hurst & Blackett, 15s.) is the record of a fine actress with a great spirit and a sane philosophy. Much of the book is mere gossip, but there is also a great deal of shrewd wisdom, as, for instance, an old trouper's appeal

to the producers to give the public credit for ten times as much native intelligence as they do.

CINE-PHOTOGRAPHY FOR AMATEURS. By J. H. Reyner (London, Chapman & Hall, 10s. 6d.) appears in a new and revised edition, and with its many illustrations and technical hints should assist the amateur to get the best results out of the efficient apparatus now at his disposal.

PRACTICAL SET STRUCTURE. By D. Charles Ottley (London, Pitman, 5s.) is another useful book for the amateur, telling how studio sets, flats, and lighting units may be made economically and with a minimum of material resources. As a practical guide it will be welcomed by all amateur cine societies who possess a studio.

THE KINE YEAR BOOK (London, Kinematograph Publications, 10s.) contains as usual a vast amount of information about film production, distribution, and the organization of the trade at home and abroad. Its 600 odd pages are a valuable encyclopædia of the screen and an essential work of reference for everyone intimately connected with the cinema.

"MOVING PICTURE MONTHLY" 1935 ANNUAL (Bombay, Re. 1. 4.) is a trade-fan illustrated survey of Indian cinema affairs, which shows that, whatever may be the quality of native production, there exists in India a stupendous enthusiasm for the new art.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

CAMPBELL NAIRNE. Film critic of the Glasgow "Bulletin" and author of "One Stair Up" and "Stony Ground."

RICHARD GRIFFITH. American film student and journalist.

ARTHUR SHEARSBY. Notable British artist, at present planning experiment in cartoon films.

MARIE SETON. Well-known writer on cinema and drama, particularly Russian.

RAGNAR ALLBERG. Swedish film journalist.

HERMAN G. WEINBERG. Conducts the Little Cinema Theatre in Baltimore, U.S.A.

ERNEST BETTS. Film critic of the "Sunday Express."

R. J. MINNEY. Anglo-Indian journalist and author of the play "Clive of India" from which the film of the same name is adapted.

PAUL ROTH. At present directing *The Face of Britain* for G.-B. Instructional.

BASIL WRIGHT. Director of *The Song of Ceylon* and numerous other documentaries.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES. Director of the Everyman Cinema, Hampstead.

KINO FILMS have recently released several more Russian films on 16mm. stock, including the two Pudovkin masterpieces, *Mother* and *Storm Over Asia*, Trauberg's *New Babylon*, as well as two good shorts—*Oil Symphony* and a cartoon, *The Little Screw*. All these, as well as their other releases (*Potemkin*, *General Line*, *Son of a Soldier*, etc.), are complete and uncut versions, and all are on non-flam stock, which makes it possible to show them anywhere without restrictions.

KINO also handle the productions of the Workers' Film and Photo League, which include one or two short documentaries, a short story film, and three news-reels. Particulars may be obtained from **KINO FILMS (1935) LTD.**, 84 Gray's Inn Road, W.C. 1.

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

HOME—FROM ABROAD

FORSYTH HARDY

THE MAJOR British films for the quarter have been British in subject, if not all British in origin. America's movie regard for this country, of which preliminary intimation was given by the faithful and reverential *Cavalcade*, has apparently steadily swollen, and we have since had *Treasure Island*, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *The Key*, *Vanessa*, the Barrie films, the Dickens films, and now the films of the British in India. There is, of course, a commercial explanation for this unnatural display of devotion, as there is a commercial explanation for most of the apparently inexplicable enthusiasms of film production. The revenue which an American picture derives from the British market is a bulky weight in the profit and loss scales. The flattering of the British film-goer is thus a simple commercial necessity. With the limitation of the foreign market through language barriers, Hollywood is obliged to regard Britain and the English-speaking possessions as its main source of revenue outside America. No longer can it afford to think only of the American film-goer in planning its productions. Thus we have the handsome and meticulously respectful *David Copperfield* and the discreet and dignified *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. "It pays to be polite," the producers murmur, surveying the balance-sheets.

This material motive perceived, it would be idle to search for special significance in this latest movie tendency; yet from the point of view of the film as a vehicle for national expression, the development is interesting. The impression of British life which these American-made films create abroad is important for this country. They are going to be shown all over the world, and a large percentage of the audience, untravelled, illiterate, is going to accept this Britain as the real thing. Is it? So far, Hollywood has been cautious and there has been flattery rather than defamation. But Hollywood has not forgotten the firmly established maxim that trade follows the film, and has been careful not to show British methods and institutions and commerce in a more favourable light than American. Generally in those American-British films, there is the suggestion that Britain is just a little backward, that it is an old-world country of Tudor mansions and tottering taxi-cabs, of dull-witted policemen and gruff, grumpy generals, of antique plumbing systems and venerable timbered houses, out of which it would be no surprise to see Mr.

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From "For All Eternity,"
Marion Grierson's film
of the Cathedrals of
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Production: Strand Films.

ABROAD

SYTH HARDY

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Micawber step. Following this line of suspicious supposition, we wonder if it is entirely by chance that Victorian themes are those most in demand in Hollywood?

Of the authenticity of the Indian films I cannot speak; but R. J. Minney, who comments on this development in the Miscellany, has observed elsewhere of *Bengal Lancer* that it "has caught the spirit of the British in India, which is essentially a noble blend of valour and discipline and manliness of a type that the Western world of this generation, with its new mincing ways, has lost entirely. . . . We see in *Bengal Lancer* how India is really governed. There is on the surface the hard-playing, polo-loving, be-all and end-all of existence. Below it is the stern thoroughness, shot with a keen sense of justice and fair play, not the sadistic fury of tyranny." It is good to have this assurance from one qualified to pass judgment. Certainly the film gives a stalwart exposition of the ideals behind British military service in India; and Hollywood, with an easy confidence which producers in this country seem unable to achieve, gives vigorous expression to a fervent brand of British patriotism. This element apart, *Bengal Lancer* is an exciting adventure story, not without its violently melodramatic moments and its blots of bathos, but handled compellingly by Henry Hathaway, and, in form, essentially of the cinema. In the last respect particularly, *Clive of India* does not stand well beside the Paramount film. One can always sense that it has been conceived as a play; that the action has been cut to suit the limitations of back-cloth and footlights; and that the emphasis is primarily on characterisation rather than on the relation of a man to a mighty background. The film dwells but lightly on the effect of Clive's manoeuvres in India. Indeed, it is quite timorous about India, and seems to be visibly relieved when the scene shifts back to London again. *Clive of India* throws off its literary harness and breaks away clean into movie only during the Plassey episode, where the armoured battle elephants claim for Suráj ud Dowlah the honour of inventing the tank. Skilled acting might yet have made this an impressive version of a fine play; but Ronald Colman and Loretta Young are out of their dramatic depth.

I can write with more knowledge of Hollywood's Barrie films as expressions of national life. It has been part of Barrie's achievement that he has introduced to a large audience Scottish types with which, from a purely music-hall or caricature conception, they were unfamiliar. Provided that they are made as carefully as *What Every Woman Knows* and *The Little Minister*, the filmed plays are likely to do the same for a very much larger audience in the cinema. They may not announce, as Scotsmen would like to see Scottish films announce to the world, that Scotland is a country of modern intentions rather than of ancient sentiments; but they will broaden and deepen a

certain conception of the Scots people. Both films contain allusions to aspects of Scots character seldom reflected on the screen. For example, in *What Every Woman Knows*, the railway porter's passionate enthusiasm for education is typical of a characteristic Scottish quality; and in *The Little Minister* we are shown something of the religious sectarianism characteristic of many Scots. *What Every Woman Knows* is the more faithful play transcription, some of Barrie's whimsicality having been transmuted to whining sentimentality in *The Little Minister*. Compensatory virtues in the latter film are its convincing Scottish atmosphere; the freedom given to an agile camera; and Katherine Hepburn's spirited and original reading of the part of Lady Babbie.

Britain also has been looking beyond her shores for film material. *The Dictator*, Toeplitz de Grand Ry's film of eighteenth-century Copenhagen, describing the romance of an ambitious but public-spirited Hamburg doctor and the young Queen of Denmark, Caroline Matilda, is sumptuous but hardly spirited, decorative but hardly deep. There is more flirting with history in *Abdul the Damned*. This is based on events in Turkey during and after the year 1908, and depicts Abdul Hamid, the autocratic but fear-ridden Sultan, being compelled by the Young Turks to sign a democratic constitution, and later, when he has temporarily brought the Old Turks back to power by branding their opponents with a political murder committed by his orders, being swept from the throne following a popular rising. There is good film material here; but the producers have confused this theme by introducing a conventionally melodramatic story of a threatened romance between a Viennese actress and a young Turkish officer, and the continual shifting of interest affects the suspense of the film, so that we are seldom gripped by its drama. Our interest is retained, however, by Fritz Kortner's study of a mind continually tormented by fear and suspicion; and by Karl Grune's vitalising direction. *Sanders of the River* is also a film of life outside Britain. I cannot, like Paul Rotha, who reviews the film elsewhere, write from first-hand knowledge of its African authenticity or otherwise. But I find it something new and engaging in film entertainment, vigorous if naïve in conception; and a remarkably effective exercise in editing and continuity, when the varied sources of the material are taken into consideration. It has life and movement and provokes some definite response, though these may all be lesser cinematic things than the achievement of representing the life of a people.

Meanwhile no one in this country makes films of Britain to-day. We have instead *Drake*, *Me and Marlborough* and *Peg of Old Drury*. And, of course, the Jubilee films.

DAVID COPPERFIELD

Production: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Direction: George Cukor. Adaptation: Hugh Walpole. Screen play: Howard Estabrook. Photography: Oliver T. Marsh. With W. C. Fields, Freddie Bartholomew, Frank Lawton and others. Length: 11,726 feet.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Production: Universal. Direction: Stuart Walker. Scenario: Gladys Unger. Photography: George Robinson. With Phillips Holmes, Henry Hull, Jane Wyatt. Length: 8,788 feet.

THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

Production: Universal. Direction: Stuart Walker. Scenario: John L. Balderston and Gladys Unger. Photography: George Robinson. With Claude Rains, Heather Angel. Length: 7,670 feet.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

Production: British International Pictures. Direction: Thomas Bentley. Adaptation: Margaret Kennedy. Photography: Claude Friese-Greene. Art Direction: Cedric Dawe. With Hay Petrie, Elaine Benson, Reginald Purdell. Length: 9,500 feet.

It is interesting to speculate on the motives which induced the movie-makers of Hollywood and Elstree to embark almost simultaneously on screen versions of Dickens novels. Dickens would appear to exercise a fatal fascination over the minds of production executives. Perhaps it is that they share with him the delusion that he could write strong stories.

The impetus which set the latest cycle in motion may be ascribed to the popularity of films with an English background; and to the demand, stimulated by what Viertel amusingly calls the "chastity campaign," for films to which Poppa can take Momma and Junior. When one examines the Dickensian philosophy, deriving as much from the innate goodness of the man as from the Victorian disposition to set God above the Devil, it is not really surprising that producers should so often have gone back to Dickens for their screen material. In Dickens the Steerforths and Heeps come to a bad end, the Doras and the Little Nells are translated from this sad world to a better, the Pickwicks and the Pips, whatever their temporary embarrassments, earn their just meed of happiness in the final chapter. Virtue is rewarded and vice punished—which is exactly the comfortable code that has informed picture-making since the earliest days of the movies. Whether it squares with the facts or not is no matter; it suits the vested interests of filmdom that the public which lines up at the box office should be put to sleep with that opiate and persuaded to accept a false standard of values. That is not to suggest that Dickens was dishonest. He had the good fortune to see the world as a place so arranged that the Quilps reap what they sow. Nor must

certain conception of the Scots people. Both films contain allusions to aspects of Scots character seldom reflected on the screen. For example, in *What Every Woman Knows*, the railway porter's passionate enthusiasm for education is typical of a characteristic Scottish quality; and in *The Little Minister* we are shown something of the religious sectarianism characteristic of many Scots. *What Every Woman Knows* is the more faithful play transcription, some of Barrie's whimsicality having been transmuted to whining sentimentality in *The Little Minister*. Compensatory virtues in the latter film are its convincing Scottish atmosphere; the freedom given to an agile camera; and Katherine Hepburn's spirited and original reading of the part of Lady Babbie.

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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Production: Universal. Direction: Stuart Walker. Scenario: Gladys Unger. Photography: George Robinson. With Phillips Holmes, Henry Hull, Jane Wyatt. Length: 8,788 feet.

THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

Production: Universal. Direction: Stuart Walker. Scenario: John L. Balderston and Gladys Unger. Photography: George Robinson. With Claude Rains, Heather Angel. Length: 7,670 feet.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

Production: British International Pictures. Direction: Thomas Bentley. Adaptation: Margaret Kennedy. Photography: Claude Friese-Greene. Art Direction: Cedric Dawe. With Hay Petrie, Elaine Benson, Reginald Purdell. Length: 9,500 feet.

It is interesting to speculate on the motives which induced the movie-makers of Hollywood and Elstree to embark almost simultaneously on screen versions of Dickens novels. Dickens would appear to exercise a fatal fascination over the minds of production executives. Perhaps it is that they share with him the delusion that he could write strong stories.

The impetus which set the latest cycle in motion may be ascribed to the popularity of films with an English background; and to the demand, stimulated by what Viertel amusingly calls the "chastity campaign," for films to which Poppa can take Momma and Junior. When one examines the Dickensian philosophy, deriving as much from the innate goodness of the man as from the Victorian disposition to set God above the Devil, it is not really surprising that producers should so often have gone back to Dickens for their screen material. In Dickens the Steerforths and Heeps come to a bad end, the Doras and the Little Nells are translated from this sad world to a better, the Pickwicks and the Pips, whatever their temporary embarrasments, earn their just meed of happiness in the final chapter. Virtue is rewarded and vice punished—which is exactly the comfortable code that has informed picture-making since the earliest days of the movies. Whether it squares with the facts or not is no matter; it suits the vested interests of filmdom that the public which lines up at the box office should be put to sleep with that opiate and persuaded to accept a false standard of values. That is not to suggest that Dickens was dishonest. He had the good fortune to see the world as a place so arranged that the Quilps reap what they sow. Nor must

one rashly impute dishonesty to the film producers, though abundant evidence of a coldly calculating outlook makes it much harder to believe in their good faith.

Obvious difficulties complicate the task of transcribing a Dickens novel into film form. Phillips Holmes, who plays the grown-up Pip in Universal's *Great Expectations*, is reported in an interview to have described Dickens as a born script writer. This is nonsensical. His long, rambling stories, framed to meet the exigencies of serial publication, are clearly unfitted to survive foreshortening on the Procrustean bed of a shooting-script. It is significant that the productions which capitalize the story—Universal's *Great Expectations* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*—are much less successful than those which make characterisation their strong point—B.I.P.'s *The Old Curiosity Shop* and M.-G.-M.'s *David Copperfield*. By partially divesting *Edwin Drood* of its caricatured characters, Universal pull it down to the level of a second-rate thriller.

Recognition that the strength of Dickens lies in his phenomenal gift for comic characterisation is the first essential, but it leaves unsolved the problem of how to present the characters. They must seem convincing and yet square with the popular conception of them, which is pretty generally founded on the Cruikshank illustrations. All four films very wisely evade the pitfall of trying to tone down their oddity. They are larger than life; they have intense reality so long as they are not pitchforked into a realistic setting. Thus it seems to me that criticism of the theatricality of Hay Petrie's Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop* is ill-advised. His vivid, electric portrait is in itself justification of his defiance of the canons of screen acting. The conventional approach would have yielded much less satisfying results. So with the sharply defined character studies in *Copperfield*, some of which, notably W. C. Fields' Micawber, Edna May Oliver's Betsey Trotwood, and Lennox Pawle's Mr. Dick, suggest nothing so much as an animation of the original magazine engravings. The whole of *Copperfield* indeed is peculiarly reminiscent of old prints, and the final shot of the roguishly smiling Mr. Dick left at least one critic with the impression of having turned over the last page of an album.

Much has been made of Hollywood's skill in evoking the authentic English atmosphere, but that is perhaps the slightest of the producer's difficulties, and it is worth noting that in all four films under review, the period background has been convincingly suggested. It is, after all, not a formidable task to reproduce half-timbered houses and inn courtyards. And a Hugh Walpole can always be brought from England as an insurance against the hypercriticism of Dickensians. It is at least arguable that if the eccentricities of the characters are well preserved, they create the correct atmosphere of themselves.

In *Copperfield* it is the quality of the characterisation almost as much as the carefully elaborated period detail which recreates the spirit of coaching England as Dickens embalmed it in the novel. One can almost smell the aroma of harness and cold mutton.

Two interesting results of the Dickensian cycle may be noted. The Dickens films have imposed on producers a modification of their policy of considering the star first and the "vehicle" afterwards. One cannot tailor a Dickensian role to fit a particular star. The search for suitable types has brought fresh talent to the cinema—Henry Hull, Elaine Benson, Hay Petrie, and Freddie Bartholomew. The second result has been the realisation that sex is not the only box-office magnet: that a good warm feeling of happiness, such as pervades *Copperfield*, can always be relied on to pack 'em in. It will be reckoned one of the main achievements of the producers of Dickensian films that, accidentally or not, they proved the cash value of happiness.

CAMPBELL NAIRNE.

SANDERS OF THE RIVER.

Production: London Films. Direction: Zoltan Korda. Photography: Osmond Borrodaile, Georges Périnal, Bernard Browne. With Paul Robeson, Leslie Banks, Nina Mae McKinney.

Sanders follows the movie tradition set by *Trader Horn*. Here are the same old Murchison Falls as a background to palaver and war-dance (those Murchison Falls to which conducted tours from nearby Kampala and En Tebbe are weekly affairs), the same eagerly snatched chances for black nudity, almost the same old friendly faces of the local tribes. What else did you expect? A unit in Uganda with, I suspect, no script that mattered. A bright idea: Robeson. Corollary: Nina Mae. Weeks and weeks of Africa built at Shepperton and Elstree (they forgot the clouds were different) and negros dug from agents' files and café-bars. Later, much later, some hints thrown out by *Bengal Lancer*. It's Jubilee Year as well. So this is Africa, ladies and gentlemen, wild, untamed Africa before your very eyes, where the white man rules by kindness and the Union Jack means peace.

You may, like me, feel embarrassed for Robeson. To portray on the public screen your own race as a smiling but cunning rogue, as clay in a woman's hands (especially when she is of the sophisticated American brand), as toady to the white man, is no small feat. With Wimperis' lyrics of stabbing and killing, with a little son to hoist around, with a hearthrug round his loins, a medallion on his navel, and a plaster forest through which to stalk, what more could Robeson do, save not a pear at all? For the others, they do not matter. Just one mon nt in this film lives. Those aeroplane scenes of

galloping herds across the Attic Plains.

It is important to remember that the multitudes of *this* country who see Africa in this film, are being encouraged to believe this fudge is real. It is a disturbing thought. To exploit the past is the historian's loss. To exploit the present means, in this case, the disgrace of a Continent. What reception will it get in Africa? Similar, perhaps, to that of *Bengal Lancer* in India, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* in France, *Red Ensign* on the Clyde. Who cares? It is only entertainment, after all.

PAUL ROTH.

ESCAPE ME NEVER

Production: British and Dominions. Direction: Paul Czinner. Scenario: Margaret Kennedy and Carl Zuckmeyer. Photography: Georges Périnal and Sepp Allgeier. Art Direction: L. P. Williams and André Andrejew. With Elisabeth Bergner, Hugh Sinclair, Griffith Jones, Penelope Dudley Ward. Length: 9,158 feet.

ST JOHN ERVINE and James Agate have recently been playing pitch and toss in the Sunday newspapers over the degree of greatness of Elisabeth Bergner's acting, judged from the evidence of the stage version of "Escape Me Never." For once I find myself in agreement with the former who states that the critic who could not instantly tell that the Bergner is a great actress after seeing her in Margaret Kennedy's play is incapable of pronouncing an opinion on acting. The latter argues weakly that if she had filled out the part of the perky little baggage, Gemma, with all the sweeping grandeur and essential nobility of mien, gesture and declamation, "lacking possession of which a tragic actress cannot be called *great*," she would have been false to the character and so betrayed her author. And St John Ervine properly retorts that the very fact that she did not betray her author by making hay of "Escape Me Never" with exhibitions of sweeping grandeur, etc., is in itself proof of her artistry.

As a show-piece for the revelation of the Bergner's virtuosity as an actress, I prefer the film *Escape Me Never* to *Catherine the Great* and to any of the German pictures, with the possible exception of *Der Traumende Mund*. The play doubtless exists only in her performance; but this "sentimental little solo in vagabondage" is perfectly fashioned to display every aspect of her technique as an actress. Everything calculated to secure our sympathy happens to Gemma, the wistful little waif, impudent, loyal, intuitive, whom Sebastian Sanger picks up in Vienna and marries in London, where she later loses her baby in the service of musical genius. But the demands on our sympathy, if unwavering, are skilfully made and Bergner chooses the precise moment to slip from laughter to tears, knows

exactly when to be majestic and when mischievous. She shows what acting can be, expressing volumes with the shrug of a shoulder, the drag of a limb; and, using dialogue brilliantly, she yet expresses much without words.

We are left with the impression of an essentially solo performance. The camera does its work of photographing Bergner smoothly, sensitively and unobtrusively and Paul Czinner in his direction reveals that mastery over mood which made *Der Traumende Mund* memorable. F.H.

SHIPYARD

Production: Gaumont-British Instructional. Direction: Paul Rotha. Photography: Pocknall, Bundy, Goodliffe, Rignold. Length: 2,250 feet.

The growing pains of documentary are shared in full measure by the documentary director. He is anguished by the perpetual conflict between the claims of form and content. The constructive use of sound introduces further complications; working to coalesce two independent mediums into an interdependent whole, he finds himself at frequent cross-purposes with all the theories he holds most dear. In point of fact, the documentarist probably suffers from a perverse kind of conservatism which urges him to cling pathetically to the technique of the last masterpiece but one. It is only in books and criticism that films like *Turksib* and *Drifters* fall into their rightful place as milestones necessarily past.

There are signs, however, that documentary is about to pass from this indeterminate conservatism to a crazier and more dangerous world. To experimentation we can now add continuity of purpose and plan, on the basis of reportage plus lyricism, plus a strong sociological consciousness. On top of this let the director be as lunatic as he likes and plunge into that unexplored area where Marx and the Marx Brothers play nuts in May with Dostoievski. He will emerge ruffled, but with a masterpiece, and naturally he must be free to ignore the box-office (or rather the things behind it).

This leads us to Rotha who, tied as he has been by influences beyond his immediate control, signals, nevertheless, in *Shipyard*, his emergence from the period of agonies and indecision. He tells of the building of the Orion—crack vessel for the Orient Line—not so much in terms of shipbuilding as in terms of Barrow and its people. Each stage of the ship's construction is put across in flesh and blood, and for all the steel-plates and girders and turbines and riveting and hammering, it is very much the men who stand up most in one's mind. Yet the emphasis is not pressed. Visually, the growing ship engrosses the screen. The sound is permeated with the clangour of the yard. But by cunning punctuation (in terms chiefly of dissolve

and soliloquy) the sociological mood is stressed.

These remarks are, I think, enough to show that in this film Rotha has made an immense step forward, and is now finally in control of his medium.

His technique is, however, still somewhat tentative. Some of the best ideas are not developed more than half-way (hence my plea for the director to stick to his craziness). A good example is a very striking sequence with a riveter at work soliloquising on the future life of the Orion, which puts the general feeling very beautifully, but does not, as it might so effectively have done, similarly pursue (quite briefly) the more intimate problems of the workers' lives (especially in reference to that ultra-civilized bogey, unemployment).

The basis of the sound-score is the shipyards' terrifying row. The Doric voice of the announcer-commentator reverberates with immense effect from the echoing caverns of the incomplete hull. Sound is also overlapped for continuity with considerable skill.

But where Rotha pushes himself well up on the directorial roster is in his final sequence—a smooth and impressive treatment of the launch (the camera restraint is most gratifying), followed by a really moving anti-climax as the workers move uncertainly away from the empty stocks. The pathetic indecision of the worker in the final fade-out is masterly.

Photography is, as usual, excellent, but also unobtrusive—another sign of progress. Cutting is very good, although I still cannot reconcile myself to the deliberate alterations of long shot and close-up which Rotha delights in. This objection, however, may be too personal.

BASIL WRIGHT.

FOR ALL ETERNITY

Production: Strand Films. Direction: Marion Grierson. Length: two reels.

IN DOCUMENTARY, as in all cinema, technique must always come second to subject, but equally technique must be sufficiently good for the subject to have adequate expression. The trouble with so many of our documentalists is their over-emphasis of technique and their underestimate of subject. But here, in this two-reeler of the cathedrals of England, is firstly a dignified respect for subject, and secondly an intelligent although not brilliant use of camera and microphone, and, above all, a moving interpretation of that curious phenomenon—the spirit of the church. My congratulations go out unreservedly to Marion Grierson for this film. Not only has she made, so modestly, a picture that will reach the emotions of any audience, but she has in this era of social unrest and mental disorder, put on the screen something which even the godless must admit has roots deeply embedded in what we call the traditions of the country. Her film will, I believe, be tremendously successful because it transmits something

solid. It has the power not just of technical creation or good looks, but of facts—hard, indisputable facts—instead of the publicity fudge which so often goes for subject in current documentary. And when, throwing open the doors of her church, she cross-sections the community in town and country, industry and street, underneath the chant of choir and the richness of anthem, your hardest materialist will be disturbed at this manifestation of faith. Again, here is no fixed moment of time hung suspended on the screen, but a feeling of continuance, a feeling of something started in dim ages that lives not just to-day but for all time. Miss Grierson has achieved something which, I think, no other documentary has done and which, I am sure, most other documentalists would be unable to do, because they lack both her simplicity of approach and that disregard of personal advancement which is reflected so strongly in her work. And, lastly, I am impressed by the skilful way in which instruction and knowledge have been mixed with emotional appeal so that both theatre audience and school class will benefit by the film, an accomplishment that makes some of these purely educational pictures look rather like waste of time and effort.

PAUL ROTH

THE CONTINENTALS

THIS quarter's continentals have been a mixed bag: one or two very good, others passable, and others negligible.

The most interesting, although one of the least commercially successful of the new films, was *Hey-Rup!*, a Czecho-Slovakian comedy with an undercurrent, perhaps unintentional, of sociological comment. It is loosely constructed, and the leading parts are played by two popular Czech comedians, Jiri Voskovec and Jan Werich. Their wanderings before establishing a co-operative milk factory are often extremely diverting, but there is too much of this, and the high spots are separated by long intervals when nothing seems to happen at all. Some episodes smack of Chaplin, others of Clair. The sound is good and the exteriors and interiors are well photographed. Technically, the film confirms the favourable impressions made by *Pred Maturitou* and *Exstase*, but as a whole it lacks any marked public appeal. It is a film for the student.

Some gorgeous fooling was seen in *Skylark*. The story is of two apprentices who go up in an aeroplane, each being under the impression that the other is an instructor. Having ascended, they are afraid to come down. They stay up for a considerable time and break every conceivable record for endurance, distance, and so on. Eventually they land, to be acclaimed national heroes. It is a comparatively short film, and even so takes rather a long time to get into its stride; but once the aeroplane goes up the fun is immense.

Noel-Noel and Fernandel are the aviators. Noel-Noel is a newcomer here. He is short, stocky, and specialises in button-eyed innocence. Those who saw *Le Rosier de Madame Husson* will not have forgotten the inspired lunacy of Fernandel, and he is exceedingly effective in *Skylark*. The denizens of Mayfair were also entertained by another arm-chair film in *Farewell*, an elegant and admittedly inaccurate story of Chopin's life. It is a polished piece of work with some pleasant music, and a number of Chopin's illustrious contemporaries are more or less convincingly represented. Entertaining, engaging and slick, but no landmark.

Those who read Vicki Baum's "Martin's Summer" must have been struck by its filmic possibilities. It has been filmed under the title *Lac aux Dames*, and duly shown in London. But it never properly gets to grips with the story, and a great deal more might have been made of the scenic background. Nevertheless, it succeeds in being reasonably entertaining, and Simone Simon, who plays the part of Puck, is most enchanting. For her sake alone the film should be seen. The faults lie in the scenario and direction, both of which are ponderous and out of tune with the basic story.

The London Film Society showed an interesting Polish film, *Sabra*, in which all the players are members of the Habima, the national theatre of Palestine. The theme is the colonisation of Palestine, and the film shows a group of pioneers fighting against the difficulty of obtaining water for the fertilisation of the land. The acting, as one might expect, is exceptionally good without being markedly theatrical, and the direction is firm and convincing. Much of the photography is excellent, and although the film runs to length and some of the episodes appear to be obscurely related to the context, as a whole it is a vigorous and refreshing piece of work.

The Old King and the Young King is magnificent. Jannings makes a triumphant and convincing return to the screen in a film after his own heart. It is the traditional, authentic Jannings, and how pleasant it is to find that he has lost none of his fire—and none of his mannerisms—during a long absence from the screen. The story is of the conflict between Frederick I of Prussia, the great soldier and statesman, and his son the Crown Prince, who is bored by soldiering and diplomacy, preferring his flute and the card-table. Frederick loves his Prussia, and is afraid lest his son should undo all his good work when he becomes king. So he determines to change his son's character, and the conflict which ensues is brilliantly depicted. Jannings dominates the film from beginning to end, without blurring the individuality of any of the other players. Werner Hinz, as the Crown Prince, is particularly effective, and the first great quarrel between him and his father is one of the most exciting things seen

in cinema for a long time. Other well-known actors in the film are Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Emilia Unda, Claus Clausen and Theodor Loos. The scenario is by Thea von Harbou and Rudolf Luckner with music by Wolfgang Zeller. Hans Steinhoff directed.

I prefer merely to record that three other films, *The Eternal Wanderer*, *Mireille* and *Son Autre Amour* have also been seen in London. But not by many people.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES.

RUGGLES OF RED GAP (*American. Paramount*). Charles Laughton has said that he enjoyed playing the part of Ruggles more than any other on stage or screen; and his performance definitely has that fine, rich, sustained quality which results when an artist has delighted in expression. Ruggles is an English valet of 1908, who, descendant of a long line of servants, accepts his destiny without question—a gentleman's gentleman who is inevitably fundamentally disturbed when circumstances compel him to go, as man-servant to a rancher, to the little Mid-Western town of Red Gap, a democratic whirlpool in which he can nowhere find a safe, familiar footing. But gradually he recovers from the shattering experience, discovers his manhood and his independence and finds fresh refuge and reassurance in the democratic principles expressed by Lincoln at Gettysburg. The scene in which he recites Lincoln's speech to a bar-room audience at Red Gap—an audacious experiment—is brilliantly handled by Laughton and his director, Leo McCarey. Admirably the film contrives to combine the liveliest clowning with an imaginative study of the atmosphere of American democracy and its emancipating influence on an Englishman, complacent product of generations of servitude. If it tilts wickedly at the English aristocracy, the film makes fun also of American snobbery and its picture of Anglo-American relations is always agreeable. Every film in which Laughton appears seems to give fresh evidence of his virtuosity. It is good to know that Hollywood has discovered his potentialities as a comedian. *Ruggles of Red Gap* has been described as pure Chaplin and the comparison is not entirely without foundation.

F.H.

THE WEDDING NIGHT (*American. United Artists. King Vidor*). This is an excellent illustration of the rule that Art will not come when you do call for it. Just previously, I saw *It Happened One Night* as it was being revived. I daresay no one concerned thought of the word "art" throughout its production. Yet this little comedy, unimportant and careless as it is, has ten times the creative strength and honesty of any part of *The Wedding Night*—of anything by Vidor, I am tempted to say, since *The Big Parade*. In his latest picture, Vidor has tried to tell a tragedy of love between a metropolitan novelist, married, and a Polish immigrant on a tobacco farm in Connecticut, engaged. It is a possible thesis, but Vidor has reduced it to the least common denominator, to squeeze the last drop of "human interest" from it. The result is a completely impossible sob-story. No one is believable, nothing that happens is convincing, save in terms of Bertha M. Clay. Something might have been saved had the players been even remotely in part. But Anna Sten, Gary Cooper, and Helen Vinson are all hopelessly at odds with their roles, though perhaps that was only a natural consequence. To add that the direction itself is generally undistinguished if not mediocre completes the sad story. Nevertheless, the film is Art, and the critics have praised it to the skies.

KIRK BOND.

WORKERS AND JOBS (*British*). A straightforward description in one reel of the working of a Labour Exchange showing, without frills or fuss, how men get or do not get work, and what advantages the employer would enjoy if he made greater use of the machinery organised by the Ministry of Labour. With the slender resources at his disposal, I do not see that Elton could have done any other than he has, save perhaps have selected a commentator whose voice would have been more suited to the atmosphere of the Exchange. Photography is adequate, but sound might have been more carefully synchronised. P.R.

DOOD WASSER (*Dutch*). An attempt, sincere but naïve, from a new quarter to relate the human being to his surroundings in bringing a social problem to the screen. The theme is the resistance of the Zuyder Zee fishermen to the appeal to give up their old calling and settle on the reclaimed land, with an elaborate prologue of maps and news-reel excerpts to put across the history of the event. Treatment is silent in style, uneconomic and laboured, but the types are well chosen and the climaxes well contrived. As a whole, the film is too long by half. P.R.

ITTO (*French*). Another attempt to superimpose a fictional story on natural material, again suffering from over-statement and over-length. Benoit-Levy and Marie Epstein (of *La Maternelle*) have secured lovely scenery and types of North Africa, but the infusion of the maternal instinct is embarrassingly handled without much result. Yet, despite its unimaginative use of sound and poor construction, *Itto* offers a more than welcome change from the ordinary release story-films. P.R.

PRIVATE LIFE OF THE GANNETS (*British. United Artists*). Charming, instructive, but too long, this first of a series of nature pictures put out beneath the chime of London Films makes a healthy bid for game. Gannets, as Professor Huxley admits, are easy birds to film, but that is no alibi for the lovely use of slow motion and the beautifully shot sequence of diving. In the past, these nature films in England have been almost the monopoly of a single group. With this first effort, London Films and Huxley have forced the pace and shot ahead. They have brought beauty of photography and a certain skill of editing to bear upon the subject. P. R.

ARE WE CIVILISED? (*American. Edwin Carewe*). The naïvety of this story of modern censorship and suppression of personal freedom is offset by the timeliness of its theme and its obvious sincerity and earnestness. A newspaper proprietor who returns from America to an unspecified European country, finds a rigorous censorship of news and books in force and, by recounting the story of man's progress from early days of cave life to modern times, seeks to convince the country's rulers of the error and danger of their ways. The film's treatment and approach are hardly imaginative, but it is significant of the present concern with thoughtful themes in Hollywood that such a subject should have been attempted. F.H.

WHARVES AND STRAYS (*British. London Films*). An independent short by Bernard Browne which claims praise for its courage and photography. The adventures of a mongrel dog, Scruffy, in exploring the activities of the London docks supply the theme and the camera for the most part concentrates its attention on the loading and unloading of ships, the work of the men on board ship and on the dockside, the low linked barges and the fussy movements of the tugs. There is no commentary, but music is used effectively to establish mood and make witty comment. And the camerawork suggests the work of a man with a feeling for mass and line.

FILM SOCIETIES

STILL the movement grows. New bodies have been formed, or are in course of formation, at Wolverhampton, Bristol, Southport, Romford, Swansea, Maidenhead, and Ipswich.

Apart from the regular film societies, numerous other organisations are now including the showing of films among their activities. The Colne Literary and Scientific Society, for instance, is co-operating with one of the local cinemas in a scheme for exhibiting films "of exceptional merit" which would not otherwise be shown in this corner of Lancashire.

The idea behind the Colne experiment was to hold a "Club Night" once a month, at which the Society would choose the films to be included in the programme and induce its members and the public generally to attend. For the first performance 1000 circulars were issued and as a result every seat was filled, 834 persons being present. The demand for admission to the second performance was even greater. Charles Hargeaves, the hon. secretary, believes "that they have discovered that there is a large untapped reservoir of people who would go to the cinema regularly if they could be assured of a decent programme and if they knew beforehand what they would see."

Colne, with a population of 24,000, has shown what can be done in a town of almost any size. Here is a way in which "Literary" societies, now rapidly dying out, can achieve a new lease of life and at the same time help to develop a wider appreciation of intelligent films.

Leeds is still without its long-projected exhibiting society, the Watch Committee having again refused an application by the Leeds Film Group to hold performances on a Sunday. Fortunately Leeds has an excellently conducted repertory cinema, the Academy, which shows Continentals, revivals, and a good selection of shorts.

WOLVERHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY will commence its first season in October, with a subscription of 10s. 6d. The Director of Education, T. A. Warren is chairman, and Leslie B. Duckworth, film critic of the "Express and Star," is vice-chairman. The programme secretary is E. L. Packer and the membership secretary W. P. Hyde, 78 Belmont Road.

The secretary of the Ipswich Film Society is Gordon C. Hales, 36 Constable Road, and A. South, 1 Mashsieters Walk, Romford, is the secretary of the Romford Film Circle. Clifford Leech, University College, Swansea; F. G. Searle, 21 Cairns Road, Bristol, 6; and Graham Morrison, 31 Grange Road, Southport, will be pleased to receive enquiries in their respective districts.

THE FILM SOCIETY, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1. Feb. 10. *Ave Maria*, Three Trailers, *Chapayev*. Mar. 10. *Workers and Jobs*, *Das Gestohlene Herz*, *Ship of the Ether*, *Dood Wasser*. April 7. *Pêcheurs D'Oiseaux*, Two Publicity films, *Itto*.

ABERDEEN FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., A. L. Stephen Mitchell, 15 Golden Square. Jan. 13. *Rain*, *Derby Day*, *La Maternelle*. Feb. 10. *Lichtertanz*, *Lot in Sodom*, *Liebes Kommando*. Mar. 10. *Pacific 231*, *We Take off our Hats*, *Der Traumende Mund*.

BILLINGHAM FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Secs., H. S. Coles and Mrs. E. H. Sale, 3 Cambridge Terrace, Norton-on-Tees. Jan. 23. *Europe To-day*, *Astronomy*, *Weather Forecast*, *Silly Symphony*, *Liebes Kommando*. Feb. 20. *Bathtime at the Zoo*, *Silly Symphony*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*. Mar. 20. *Song of the Ski*, *Pett and Pott*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Liebelei*. April 17. *Pacific Problem*, *War Debts*, *Spring on the Farm*, *Cathode Ray*, *Silly Symphony*, *Reka*.

COLNE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., C. Hargeaves, Greystones, Colne. Feb. 20. Newsreel, *Silly Symphony*, *Everest 1924*, *Kameradschaft*. Mar. 27. Newsreel, *O'er Hill and Dale*, Mickey Mouse, *Carmen*, *Le Million*.

The Society hopes to arrange an extended season next winter and to include lectures on various aspects of the cinema.

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., G. R. Bailey, 51 High Street. Jan. 20. Mickey Mouse, *Spring on the Farm*, *Poil de Carotte*. Feb. 17. *Crazy Ray*, *Le Dernier Milliardaire*. Mar. 17. *The Battle of Arras*, *Blow Bugles Blow*.

Talks have been given by H. Ewan on the French Cinema, and by Sir Philip Gibbs on *The Battle of Arras*. Ivor Montagu and Paul Rotha were guests at the Society luncheon on March 17, when they addressed the members.

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD, 17 S. St. Andrew Street. Feb. 24. *Dawn to Dawn*, *Joie de Vivre*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*. Mar. 24. Two Gasparcolor shorts, *All Quiet in the East*, Fischinger abstract, *The Song of Ceylon*, *Refugees*.

Campbell Nairne addressed the Guild on "A Novelist's View of the Scenario," and D. Cleghorn Thomson took the chair at a discussion on "The Relations Between Cinema and Stage." On Feb. 6 there was a special show of G.P.O. films in the Studio.

FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW. Hon. Sec., D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street. Feb. 3. *Football Daft*, *All Quiet in the East*, *Nachtliche Ruhestrung*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*. Feb. 24. 6.30 Collection, *The Idea*, *Lieblei*. Mar. 17. *Le Million*, *Joie de Vivre*, *Refugees*.

The membership of the Society has grown to such an extent that it has been necessary to hold afternoon as well as evening performances. Glasgow, as well as being the oldest society outside of London, is now probably the largest—and certainly not the least enthusiastic or efficient.

HAMPSTEAD FILM SOCIETY. Everyman Cinema Theatre, London, N.W.3. Jan. 20. *Un Monastère*, *Warning Shadows*. Feb. 17. *Beyond This Open Road*, *Blow, Bugles, Blow*. Mar. *Der Gestolene Herz*, *Domesday England*, *Zero de Conduite*. April. *The Birth of a Nation*.

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College. Jan. 19. *What the Newsreel Shows*, *Oil Symphony*, *All Quiet in the East*, *A Trip to Davy Jones' Locker* (colour primitive), *Rapt*. Feb. 9. *Beyond this Open Road*, *Oil Symphony*, *The Doomed Battalion*, *Nachtliche Ruhestrung*. Feb. 16. *The Sundew*, *Un Monastère*, *Le Dernier Milliardaire*. Mar. 16. Three Early Fragments, *Droitwich*, *Anna und Elisabeth*, *Joie de Vivre*. April 13.

The Society arranged a special exhibition of sketches by Stella Burford, illustrating work inside a British film studio.

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY, 86 Hulton Street, Salford. Jan. 19. *Power*, *Mail*, *Charlemagne*. Feb. 16. *Russia To-day*, *Gamla Stan*, *Pett and Pott*, Fischinger abstract, *Oil Symphony*. Mar. 16. *Vienna the Wonderful*, *The Amæba*, *Contact*, *Zero de Conduite*.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool. Feb. 15. Zuts Cartoon, *Oil Symphony*, *Poil de Carotte*. April 12. *Night on the Bare Mountain*, *Joie de Vivre*, *Dawn to Dawn*, *Men and Jobs*.

On Feb. 26 there was a special exhibition of educational films arranged by Gaumont-British, and on April 25 there was a show of G.P.O. films. On Mar. 14 Dorothy Knowles spoke on "Censorship," and on Mar. 24 C. J. Graham on "Acting for Films in 1912." *Cinderella* was shown on sub-standard.

NORTH LONDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., H. A. Green, 6 Carysfort Road, Stoke Newington, London, N.16. Feb. 3. *Crossing the Great Sagrada*, Gasparcolor, *Lot in Sodom*, *The Living Corpse*.

NORTHWICH FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., W. Baldwin Fletcher, I.C.I. (Alkali) Ltd., Northwich. Mar. 8. *Night on the Bare Mountain, Weather Forecast, The Blue Express.*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY. Feb. 10. *Weather Forecast, Silly Symphony, Mickey Mouse, Le Dernier Milliardaire.* Feb. 24. *Night on the Bare Mountain, The Pacific Problem, Silly Symphony, The Birth of a Nation.* Mar. 10. *Joie de Vivre, Pett and Pott, Silly Symphony, Men and Jobs.*

F. Serpell has been elected President and F. L. Harley Secretary.

SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY, 21 Ethelburt Avenue, Bassett Green, 12 St. Swithun Street, Winchester. Jan. 27. *Un Monastère, La Maternelle.* Feb. 17. *A Trip to Davy Jones' Locker, Industrial Britain. Ces Messieurs de la Sante.* Mar. 3. *Night on the Bare Mountain, Joie de Vivre, Poil de Carotte.* Mar. 17. *Turksib, The Slump is Over.*

TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., M. C. Pottinger, Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle. Jan. 27. Fischinger abstract, *Pett and Pott, Trailer, Reka.* Feb. 24. *Pacific 231, Crazy Ray, Poil de Carotte.* Mar. 24. Fischinger abstract, *Granton Trawler, Night on the Bare Mountain, Thunder Over Mexico.* April 14. *Weather Forecast, Gasparcolor, Surprise Item, Ces Messieurs de la Santé.*

The White Hell of Pitz Palu and *Storm over Asia* have been shown on sub-standard and there has been a special Young People's Performance. Discussions are held after each show.

WEST OF SCOTLAND WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., James Hough, 16 Balerno Drive, Glasgow, S.W.2. Feb. 10. *The Mascot, The Idea, Avalanche.* Mar. 3. *The Home of the Wasp, Granton Trawler, Men and Jobs.* Mar. 31. *Deserter.*

THE CINEMA GUILD OF DETROIT is a new organisation similar to the film societies operating in Britain, founded on a belief that "the standards of American motion pictures underestimate public taste," and that "the rulings of institutionalised censorship constitute a reflection on public taste." The subscription for six performances is four dollars, and the films shown have included *Poil de Carotte, Madame Bovary, Le Million, The Blue Light, The Blue Express, Dawn to Dawn, Lot in Sodom, and Romance Sentimentale.*

THE NATIONAL FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE, 31 E. 21st Street, New York, shows films of strong left wing character. Among recent presentations have been *The Man I Killed, The Patriot, Three Songs about Lenin, Deserter, Arsenal, Road to Life, Storm Over Asia, End of St. Petersburg, Mother, and Ivan.* The League publishes "Filmfront," a fortnightly periodical which "trains the burning spotlight on the Hollywood jungle and shows the black thread that links the producers with the forces of re-action."

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF CINEMATOGRAPHY, University Park, Los Angeles, is a new organisation founded on lines similar to the British Film Institute, co-operating with the University of Southern California, which has a special faculty in cinematography.

SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL CINEMA SOCIETY, Education Offices, Bath Street, Glasgow, organised an Exhibition of Screen Aids to Education, similar to that held last year. Sir Charles Cleland, acting chairman of the British Film Institute, in opening the exhibition, said that early in 1935 there were approximately 650 projectors in use in schools in Great Britain. In France in 1932 there were between 16,000 and 18,000. In Germany provision had recently been made for the introduction of 60,000 projectors into schools, 10,000 of those to be installed in 1935. Demonstrations of projection equipment and of educational films were given at the exhibition, which was largely attended by teachers in the West of Scotland.

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SCOPE FOR THE SILENT FILM

FROM schools, technical colleges, institutions, mobile units, training centres and other sources there comes an increasing demand for documentary and educational films. All of these films are on sub-standard and, most important for the amateur, they are wanted mainly silent.

We can assume then that the future of the silent documentary film on sub-standard is assured, and that it will be used extensively in the near future. This is where the independent producer appears. He has been making films for schools and colleges; he has been making documentary; he has made educational films; and for the entertainment side, which seems to be growing larger, he has made entertainment films. But something has been missing from nearly every one of them, something that constitutes the basis of cinema: movement. These silent films have lost sight of the fact that they are unhampered by sound or commentary and therefore capable of more dynamic and kinetic treatment.

All films, and most educational films, are not suited for quick rhythmical development, but those which are have not attained the movement even of an early Fairbanks. They merely follow the technique of sound-film. There is still opportunity for the amateur to continue the art of silent film, which is capable of development as a separate medium, as the colour film is being developed. All recent developments of cinema have made it harder and harder for the producer to introduce essential and rapid movement into his films. The wealth of movement which was to be found in rushing crowds; the movement in the camera itself, which the Germans perfected; the movement of the film-strips which the Soviets dis-

covered—has been thrown overboard. Amateurs with enthusiasm must fish it out again and explore its further possibilities.

Movement dominates people's lives. The panorama outside a railway carriage, however depressing, has most of the people in the train looking at it. The sea with its constant movement claims its millions. The moving figure or living person in the shop window always has a crowd. When lying in bed, the fly gets more attention than the Rembrandt on the wall. A quickly changing face showing all its emotions is generally loved more than a poker face that moves but little. Movement is in everything, and only the film has the power of showing it pictorially, and perhaps the silent film has the power of showing it most successfully. The amateur need not bewail the fact that he does not have sound at his disposal; in the silent film he still has a vast field in which to develop his technique and explore the possibilities of a medium still far from extinction.

LESLIE BEISIEGEL.

AMATEUR FILMS

GRETCHEN HAT AUSGANG (*Ellen Rosenberg*, 16mm.). This little film with a simple theme has been excellently treated. A lonely servant girl on her afternoon out nearly has an affair with a nice young man, but the budding romance never happens because the poor girl suddenly discovers that it is time for her to return to her duties. Ellen Rosenberg has made this awkward girl, who gazes stupidly at statues of Cupid and hopelessly plucks the petals of flowers one by one, something wistful and even slightly tragic. Delicate touches have given the right emphasis to the theme and a completeness of atmosphere that is seldom seen in an amateur film. Many lessons can be taken from this film; briefly, that it is not necessary to have studios, that the best themes are the simple ones, the best actors are those who don't act but behave naturally, and lastly that one frame of sincerity is worth a reel of sophistication. The camera angles are good and the cutting is good inasmuch that one does not notice it.

HEITERER TAG AUS RÜGEN (*Ellen Rosenberg*, 16mm.). This symphonic film of a pleasant sojourn on the Isle of Rügen has perhaps the most beautiful photography that I have seen on 16mm. There are three main motifs, a mechanical swing, a group of horses and the sea on the sand. It is through movement that Ellen Rosenberg gets her effects—movement of material and rhythm in her cutting. Though the camera angles are well chosen the cutting is not so good. Quicker cutting could have been used at the climax of the film, coming as a natural development of the mood of growing hilarity.

PONT DES ARTS (*Horacio Coppola*, 16mm.). This is another symphonic film, but different in mood. Down-and-outs, the Seine, huge gaunt trees, mud, dirt and despair. Here is hopelessness, devastating bleakness; here men thrown on the scrap-heap become little more than parcels of rags. Do we know what they are thinking? Coppola's film does not tell us this, but shows us how they live. There is no entreaty, no personal argument, but a revelation through impassionate eyes. Is this attitude correct? Whether an artist must also be a political or a social reformer is for the artist to decide.

Technically the photography is good and several shots are perfect in composition and texture; but there is too much movement in the camera and not enough in the material. The continuity has to rely upon pictorial cohesion and not upon development of content—the look of the picture as against the meaning of the picture. This is a good attempt.

DER TRAUM (*Horacio Coppola*, 16mm.). The influence of the sur-realists has made Coppola produce an intriguing and amusing film. A young man is shown asleep with his head on the table amid egg-shells and knife and fork. There are some pleasing patterns here, but what is their Freudian or symbolic significance? The young man sees his "Sunday self" mocking him by stealing his pocket book, with much money therein, and insinuating that he also intends doing likewise with the young man's lover. The week-day man and the same man on Sundays are symbolised by a topper and bowler hat. This is good symbolism and when one man chases the other there is an excellent atmosphere in the slow-motion scenes of the chase. The kinetics of the falling hat and ball are excellent; the movements of such commonplace things carry that strange kind of personality they have in dreams.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH (*Horacio Coppola*, 16mm.). Here is an account of a Sunday at Hampstead, showing the types of people who frequent the Heath. It has several short sequences that are good both in continuity and cutting. I remember the chairs and their attendant, the fair in the evening, the impressive scene of all the people walking in one direction towards their homes. There is a subtle streak of engaging drollery running through the film. Why very fat women posed straight up in front of the camera should look so funny only Coppola with his artful angles knows. The various moods have been established, sometimes with success, but cutting down would greatly improve the film. The photography is good and some pictorial arrangements very exciting. There are some filtered clouds and reflecting lakes that are very beautiful, and the whole film is well exposed.

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